

Church-Membership

ADDRESSES AND PRAYERS

at the Meetings of the Ev. Lutheran
Joint Congregation of St. Louis, Mo.,
and Its Board of Elders

by

DR. C. F. W. WALTHER

Translated from the Original German

by

RUDOLPH PRANGE

Pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, St. Joseph, Mo.



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Preface to the Original Edition.

Those who are not familiar with the plan under which the four older Evangelical Lutheran congregations of St. Louis operated, may welcome a few words of explanation. The oldest congregation in St. Louis of the pure Evangelical Lutheran confession is Trinity Congregation. It was organized by Saxon immigrants in the early part of 1839. Its first pastor, Otto Herman Walther, died January 21, 1841. He was succeeded by his brother, Dr. C. F. W. Walther. In the course of time three other congregations sprang from this parent congregation — Immanuel Congregation in 1847, Holy Cross Congregation in 1858, and Zion Congregation in 1860. Since the newly formed congregations desired to remain in close contact with the parent congregation, and particularly since they wished to enjoy the advantages of the rich spiritual talents of Dr. Walther also after they had effected a separate organization, they formed a joint congregation, with Dr. Walther as pastor at large. Each of these four congregations was regarded as a district of the joint congregation; but each had its own pastor, teacher or teachers, school, treasury, and property and transacted its own business. The joint congregation attended to the matter of receiving and expelling members and of nominating candidates for the pastorates in case of vacancies, while the respective district congregation itself elected its pastor. In addition, important doctrinal questions and questions of the day were discussed at the meetings of the joint congregation. Treatises on a number of those questions and topics were circulated in tract form; for example, treatises on usury, dancing, theater-going, Communism and Socialism, and on the joining of a congregation. Four times every year — at Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and on the Reformation anniversary — the pastor at large was expected to preach in one of the four churches, while the local pastors preached in their own churches one Sunday and in one of the other three churches the following Sunday. The board of elders of the joint congregation was composed of the elders of the four district congregations and the four local pastors. The joint congregation as well as the board of elders at large met every two months. The pastor at large opened the meetings with prayer. In the regular meetings of the joint congregation the newly received members signed the constitution, whereupon the pastor at large addressed them briefly.

These addresses and opening prayers of Dr. Walther constitute the contents of this book. Those contained in this book are, of course, not all the addresses delivered by him. But unfortunately not more than these could be found after his death. It seems that he did not make it a practise to reduce them to writing until later in life. This book brings them as they were found in manuscript, either written out in full or merely sketched. Only in a few cases slight additions — what seemed to be necessary amplifications — were made; but these have been printed in brackets to distinguish them from the original text. — Most of the addresses are based on some Bible-text; they point out to the members their duties and privileges as Christians as well as the great blessings of pure doctrine which the Lutheran Church of America enjoys as compared with the American sects and the state churches of Europe, together with liberty of conscience, in contradistinction to churches in some European countries. That very fact assures to these addresses permanent worth; and if they are used, they will be of far-reaching blessing to our congregations.

As to the prayers, every Christian reader will feel that they have proceeded from the Spirit of Grace and Prayer. They, too, in most cases, bring before God in petition and thanksgiving some special matter. They either carry out some thought suggested by the various festival seasons or treat of the Church of Christ, or of the pure Word of God, or of Christian conduct, or of Christian loyalty, or of some other pertinent matter. Viewed from that angle, they are prayers which every Christian can make his own when praying either for himself, for his congregation, or for the Church of Christ in general. Pastors will find that both as to form and contents these prayers are excellent patterns after which to model their prayers for the opening of voters' meetings.

The joint congregation herewith offers this brief collection of addresses and prayers for publication, wishing thereby to set up a memorial of gratitude to their beloved sainted pastor, who served them most faithfully and with such signal success for well-nigh half a century, but also hoping that the Church may continue to reap the blessings sown by that great man.

May it please God to fulfil these hopes even beyond our expectations!

St. Louis, Mo., Easter, 1888.

Preface to the English Translation.

When Dr. Walther spoke and wrote, he always expressed something worth while. Accordingly, the policy of Concordia Publishing House to render into English the outstanding productions of that great man will be appreciated by those not familiar with the German language.

In the present undertaking an effort has been made to let Dr. Walther speak twentieth-century English rather than to give the exact English equivalent for every word and phrase found in the German original.

The titles of the addresses and prayers as well as the table of contents have been supplied by the translator in the hope of adding to the practical usefulness of the book.

The addresses and prayers in this volume should find wide-spread use — by no means restricted to the voters' or elders' meetings. Pastors and religious leaders will find in the utterances of Dr. Walther excellent suggestions for talks and prayers for other occasions as well. Indeed, what a fine thing it would be if our lay people would adopt this volume as a handbook to enrich their lives as church-members! Every one who will make Dr. Walther's prayers his own and pray daily in the spirit of that man of God is certain to be rewarded with inspiration and understanding, which, in turn, will show itself in increased devotion to his Savior and His Church.

God grant that these addresses and prayers in their new English dress may continue to exert the influence for good which in the German language they certainly have exerted for many years!

St. Joseph, Mo., May 20, 1930.

R. P.

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ADDRESSES TO MEMBERS
OF THE CONGREGATION.

1. Importance of Church-Membership.

In the presence of your brethren you have now signed your names to the constitution of our congregation. By so doing, some of you have established their first affiliation with this church; others have thereby become voting members. In the name of the congregation I bid you a cordial welcome. Permit me to add a few words of encouragement.

In the second chapter of the Book of Acts, St. Luke describes the founding of the first Christian congregation at Jerusalem. In the last verse of that chapter we read: "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

These words have a twofold message for us. 1) They tell us who it is that adds new members to a Christian congregation. 2) They emphasize the importance of such a step.

First we are told: "The Lord added to the church daily." That the adding of believing souls to a Christian congregation is ascribed solely to the Lord should not surprise you. For bear in mind that only a few weeks previously Jesus had died on the cross, a fact which had been a great stumbling-block even to the disciples. In view of that fact do you think that even one person would have joined the Christian congregation if the Holy Spirit had not been operative within him, enlightening him and working the assurance in his heart that the Crucified One had risen from the dead and that He is in truth the Son of God and the world's Savior? Add to this the fact that by joining the Christian congregation the people of Jerusalem not only failed to gain earthly advantages, but, on the contrary, could not but expect disgrace, aye, even bloody persecution. Certainly, any one who at such a time was not drawn by the power of the Holy Spirit remained outside the Christian congregation.

As then, so also to-day it is God who adds souls to a Christian congregation. True, in our day it is not the fear of bloody persecution that makes it necessary for the Lord to do so; but there are obstacles to a man's becoming a Christian, and even greater ones than persecutions. To begin with, we are living in an age of almost universal falling away and unbelief. Millions who have been baptized into the name of Christ now care nothing about God, about religion, or about the Church. They regard Christianity as superstition and fanaticism or even as wilful deception on the part of the clergy. In view of such a situation, who to-day would join a Christian congregation if it were not for the drawing power of God? In addition, even the love of Christians has grown cold, and even the wise virgins are beginning to nod. Hence who to-day would join a Christian congregation if the Lord did not open his eyes?

True, in our day the majority enter the Church in tender infancy, without their own choice, and even many of those who enter later do so merely to please other members of the family — children, to please their parents; wives, to please their husbands, and *vice versa*, and so on. Nevertheless, it is always God who calls them. And He does so in order that after they have outwardly joined the congregation, He may bring them to faith through the Word which they hear in church. There are, of course, always some who persist in spurning God's efforts.

The words of Luke: "The Lord added to the church daily such as *should be saved*," also emphasize the importance of the step of uniting with a Christian congregation. Such a step is important because the salvation of an immortal soul is involved.

Entering other unobjectionable associations, such as becoming a citizen, entering the state of holy wedlock or a busi-

ness relation, is left to the choice of the individual; but not the matter of uniting with a Christian congregation. This he must do if he desires the grace of God and wishes to save his soul.

Naturally, we should first make sure that we are true believers and members of the *invisible* Church, outside of which there is no salvation. But if we are that, we should also show our colors by becoming members of the true visible Church if at all possible. While in the world, we must espouse the cause of those with whom we expect to share heaven. We must fight within the ranks of the Church Militant if we hope to triumph with the Church Triumphant. A man's attitude toward Christians is a true indication of his attitude toward Christ. Christ says: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

Rejoice therefore that you are becoming a member of this congregation to-day. Bear in mind the words of Luke: "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

May our Savior keep you and all of us faithful unto death and finally give us the crown of life, the salvation of our souls! Amen.

2. Faithfulness to the End.

"He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." With this significant utterance of our Lord Jesus Christ I greet you in the name of this congregation, after you have signed our constitution and thereby publicly declared your intention to join us in our pilgrimage heavenward.

We are confident that you have taken this step only because you are true Christians. However, you have not yet reached the end of your pilgrimage. For that reason I would

warn you at the outset that only he who endures to the *end* will be saved.

Of what benefit to Lot's wife was her escape from Sodom when regret later prompted her longingly to look back?

Of what benefit to Saul was the change that came over him when the Spirit of God entered his heart? For later he turned aside from God's Word and command.

Of what benefit to Judas was it that he followed the call into apostleship since later he permitted the demon of greed to possess his heart?

Of what benefit to Demas were his associations with Paul in view of the fact that he later deserted Paul and again loved the world?

Those Jews who had followed Jesus for a season lost all they had gained when "they walked no more with Him."

What would it have booted David to have been called at one time a man after God's heart after he had committed such gross sins if he had not sincerely repented?

Being called blessed by Jesus would have availed Peter nothing after he had thrice denied his Savior in the hour of grave temptation if he had not wept bitterly over his sin and believingly returned to Christ.

Oh, then, be warned by these examples!

Remember, however, that there are many and various ways in which a Christian may lose his faith.

Manifestly *mortal* sins, such as murder, adultery, fornication, theft, will *instantly* rob us of our faith.

But we may deviate from the right also *gradually*, by daily becoming more and more *sluggish* in watching, fighting, praying, reading and hearing the Word of God, until finally we have returned to our former natural, unconverted state and

the words spoken to the bishop of Sardis apply also to us: "Thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead."

Following our own reason may prove fatal to our faith if we permit ourselves to be misled into *fundamentally false doctrines*, as, for example, the Galatians, who no longer wished to be saved by grace alone, without the deeds of the Law.

Spiritual shipwreck is likewise apt to result if we, as did some of the Colossians, look down upon others in a "*holier-than-thou*" spirit.

Imagining that they "*know it all*" has caused many to withdraw when they could not have their own way.

Becoming *offended* at the weaknesses and faults of Christians who profess adherence to the pure doctrine is apt to start us on the road that leads away from God.

But why continue? I could go on indefinitely naming various ways in which a Christian is likely to lose his faith.

Therefore, engrave on your hearts these words of the Lord: "He that shall *endure* unto the end, the same shall be saved." Cast away therefore all trust in your own selves and depend wholly on divine grace. In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." Many a one has said to his Savior: "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended"; and still he fell away. Therefore, in conclusion, I plead with you: "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown."

3. The Glories of the Lutheran Church.

Before many witnesses, dear brethren, you have signed the constitution of our congregation. Thereby you have become a part of our organization as voting members. Allow me to welcome you in the name of the congregation.

Yesterday was the beginning of the week in which occurs the birthday of our beloved Reformer Luther. Therefore, I would improve this opportunity by emphasizing the fact that you are now members of the Church which bears the great Reformer's name.

Upon that fact you are to be congratulated. You are members, not of a sect, but of the Church of the Reformation, which has been purged of all the corruptions of Popery, the Church of the pure doctrine and the unadulterated Sacraments, the orthodox Church, the true visible Church of God on earth. All the sects that have left the Roman Church were originally Lutheran. The Swiss, the French, the Dutch, the English, and the Scottish so-called Reformed sects, all were at one time Lutheran, and the good features which they still possess they owe to the Reformation of Luther. Their first martyrs were Lutheran martyrs. As Lutherans they were put to death by the papists. The claim of all these sects that they are more thoroughly purged of papal corruptions than the Lutheran Church amounts to nothing more than this — they cast overboard not only the false popish doctrines, but also those Bible doctrines of the Lutheran Church which they could not reconcile with their reason.

Rejoice therefore that you have become united with the old, genuine Church of the Reformation.

Regard not our persons. We, too, are poor sinners, having many failings. But great treasures are ours — not such treasures as are at the mercy of thieves or rust and moths, but treasures far different, much greater, and exceedingly more precious. We have the pure Word of God. We know the right way to heaven. We have the true doctrine concerning good works. We have true consolation in days of tribulation and in the hour of death. We have the Sacraments of Holy

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, confession as instituted by Christ. We practise and apply the same rules of discipline as did the apostles. We tolerate no manifest servant of sin. We tolerate none who refuse to accept God's Word at full worth, who cling to fundamental errors, and will not permit themselves to be admonished in a brotherly way. We practise brotherly admonition, church discipline, and excommunication as instituted by Christ.

We have beautiful services and pleasing ceremonies.

We have books — Catechisms, hymn-books, books of forms, schoolbooks — that are free from error.

Rejoice, then, because you have every reason to do so.

Be faithful therefore and loyal unto the end, so that, when you die a blessed death, you will be translated from this earthly congregation into the triumphant Church of the elect in heaven.

God grant it for the sake of Christ, our Savior, to whom be glory in time and in all eternity! Amen.

4. Church-Membership a Privilege.

The children of this world often think it strange that any one should want to unite with the Christian Church. To them such a step amounts to nothing less than burdening oneself with unnecessary duties and obligations.

Some are somewhat more moderate in their views. While they, too, lament the burdens which church-membership brings with it, they are reconciled to the idea of assuming such additional burdens because they regard this as necessary if they wish to be Christians.

But I would not have you view matters thus. The assuming of the obligations of church-membership should not be looked upon as an unpleasant duty, but rather as a rare

privilege. Church-membership makes us stockholders in a firm that possesses and distributes vast treasures.

A Christian congregation is a court that is supreme in its particular sphere of jurisdiction, and each one who joins it is a fellow-judge. The Christian congregation is entrusted with the administration of the keys of heaven here on earth, and the Christian as church-member is one of the administrators. By uniting with a Christian congregation, we assume a place in the household of God. A Christian congregation is a prayer league, and the church-member shares every one of its prayers. A Christian congregation is Christ's spouse here on earth, whose powers and privileges every member shares.

Wonderful promises have been made to Christian congregations. Just to remind you of some: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." Many more could be mentioned. The individual church-member becomes a partaker of all those promises.

An incident from the life of Thomas the Apostle illustrates what such lose as separate themselves from the Christian congregation. When Christ had died on the cross, Thomas withdrew from the grieved and despised little congregation at Jerusalem. Consequently, when the risen Christ visited His little flock, showed them His glory, and filled their hearts with consolation and peace, Thomas failed to share in that gracious visitation and dragged his hopelessness and despair around with him for eight days more.

But it is not enough, my dear friends, to *join* a Christian congregation. To share its blessings, we must become *living*

members by true faith. As a dead branch hung upon a tree fails to bud when in spring the tree begins to show life and does not blossom and bear fruit, but is taken off and cast into the fire, even so a man devoid of faith is benefited in no way whatever by hanging on the tree of the Church; for when the spring of eternal life puts in its appearance, he is removed and cast into the fire of hell.

God grant therefore that you may have become united with our congregation through a living faith. If so, you will never regret it. Instead, you will some day be transplanted with all true members into the paradise above. May our Lord Jesus Christ grant this unto us all! Amen. *Let us pray for the conversion of all sinners, and for the preservation of all true Christians.*

5. The Motives and Qualifications of a Genuine Church-Member.

By signing the constitution of our congregation, you have shown that you approve of it and have solemnly promised to abide by it. In the name of our congregation I welcome you as voting members.

Permit me to add a few remarks.

Only that is a good deed which is prompted by proper motives and performed in a proper spirit. Alms, for example, are good deeds only when given out of love, not under pressure or merely to make people believe that you are a Christian. Diligence in our earthly calling is a good deed only when it issues from the desire to please God, who wills that we eat our daily bread in the sweat of the brow, and not because you wish to gain riches.

The same holds true with respect to joining a Christian congregation. That, too, is a good deed only if we do so because it is Christ's will that believers unite in proclaiming His Word, conducting public worship, and building and

spreading His kingdom. The same step would be sinful if taken for the sake of earthly gain, as we read of Simon, the sorcerer, who joined the Christian congregation in Samaria to enrich himself in a material way. (Acts 8.)

What has just been said holds true also in the case of those who unite with a truly Evangelical Lutheran congregation. Also this step is a good deed only if they wish to join such a congregation in preference to a congregation of another denomination because they are convinced that only the Evangelical Lutheran Church teaches the pure, unadulterated doctrine of God's Word. Were some one, however, to seek voting membership in a Lutheran congregation simply because he was born and reared in its midst, or to please his parents, or because his friends are members of that congregation, or because the location of its church makes it convenient to attend its services, he would not perform a good deed, even though God may have led him into that church for the purpose of *making* him a true Lutheran, in other words, an orthodox Christian.

What has been said emphasizes three factors that are essential in the make-up of a genuine member of a Lutheran congregation.

1. A genuine member of a Lutheran congregation must have a thorough understanding of the pure Lutheran doctrine or at least must desire to grow in the knowledge of it. Such a one will imitate the Bereans in searching the Scriptures daily; he will not lay aside his Catechism when he has completed his elementary school-training, but throughout his life continue to review it in order that he may understand it better and become more thoroughly grounded in it. He will read other good orthodox books and periodicals to become ever more firmly established in the pure doctrine. Heb. 5 those Christians who are neglectful in this point are censured. We read: "When

for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God and are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat."

2. A member of a Lutheran congregation must be able to defend his faith and to prove its correctness from God's Word. St. Peter writes, 1 Pet. 3, 15: "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." A sad state of affairs is revealed when members of a Lutheran congregation, asked about their faith, say, "You will have to ask my pastor about that."

3. A member of a Lutheran congregation should be able to distinguish pure doctrine from the false doctrines of the sects and must heartily abhor all false doctrines. Only spineless Lutherans can say: "What do I care about doctrinal controversies! They do not concern me in the least. I'll let those who are more learned than I am bother their heads about such matters." They even may be offended when they observe that religious leaders engage in doctrinal disputes. A genuine Lutheran will not forget that in the Epistle of Jude also lay Christians are admonished "earnestly to contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." What is more, Christ warns all Christians: "Beware of false prophets." And St. John writes in his first epistle: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world."

It is a settled fact that whoever is indifferent to false doctrine is indifferent also to pure doctrine and his soul's salvation and has no right to bear the name Lutheran and the name of Christ.

May all of you now take to heart what has been said, and may you in every way prove to be true members of a Lutheran congregation! To that end may our Lord Jesus Christ assist you and all of us with His grace and His Spirit! Amen.

6. The American Lutheran Church Is Truly Lutheran.

When Lutheran Christians who were reared in the state church of Germany become acquainted with one of our congregations, they find many features which are entirely new to them.

Before being received into membership, they are first instructed and examined in the doctrine of the Lutheran Church to make sure that they believe the Holy Scriptures, both the Old and the New Testament, to be God's Word and that they regard the Lutheran doctrine as the teaching of God's Word itself.

They are examined not only as to whether they lead respectable lives, but also as to whether they are true Christians, that is, whether through true repentance they have become humble sinners and through the Holy Spirit have come to a living faith, and whether they now prove the sincerity of their faith by leading a holy, a truly Christian life.

Notice is taken whether they have family worship at home in addition to morning and evening prayers and prayer at meal-time, whether they attend church regularly, and whether they often partake of Holy Communion.

They are not permitted to send their children to the public schools, where no religious instruction is offered, but are required to give their children the benefits of a truly orthodox Christian school. They are not permitted to join secret societies and other worldly associations organized for mutual

support. They are not permitted to visit saloons, attend theaters, or to take part in dances.

If any one persists in false doctrine or commits some other grievous sins or even becomes addicted to some vice, he is admonished by a brother who knows of it. If he does not repent, he is admonished again, this time in the presence of witnesses. If he still remains impenitent, he is invited to appear before the congregation and is admonished publicly [and if he does not repent, he is expelled from the congregation].

Since in this country no public funds are available for the support of pastor and teacher, as well as for the purpose of defraying other necessary expenses, the members must contribute regularly to the support of the congregation.

Many look upon these features as innovations and doubt whether it is really the Lutheran Church which they have joined.

They are mistaken. These features are not inventions of our own, but are taken from Scripture. They appear new only because the union of Church and State in Germany has caused them to be pushed into the background, yea, abandoned altogether.

May you feel truly at home in our midst!

7. How Important It Is to Belong to the True Bible Church.

Some people cling to the opinion that a person must continue in that church-body into which he was born and in which he received his early religious training and was confirmed. They regard him as a suspicious character who gives up his religion and leaves his Church.

Such people are greatly in error.

If a person who has received his religious instruction in a Church whose doctrines disagree with the Bible later on

comes to recognize the errors of his Church, it is his sacred duty to sever his connections with it. For it is written: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves," Matt. 7, 15. "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds," 2 John 10, 11. "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself," Titus 3, 10. 11. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers," 2 Cor. 6, 14.

If every one were compelled to adhere throughout life to that religious system under which he was born, the heathen would have to remain a heathen, the Jew a Jew, the Turk a Turk, the papist a papist; then Luther would have sinned by leaving the Church of Rome and pleading with all: "Come out of Babylon that ye receive not of her plagues." Then he should not have undertaken the great work of reforming the Church. Then it would not have been necessary even for the Son of God to come into the world and found the New Testament Church.

It is an indisputable fact that we must leave a Church whose doctrines are contrary to the Bible, even though on the day of confirmation we have sworn loyalty to it. (Baptism.)

On the other hand, it is equally certain that whoever was born, reared, and confirmed in the Church of the pure Word must remain in it and rather suffer even death than fall away from it.

Whoever does not take sides with those who stand for Christ and His pure Word neither takes sides with Christ. For on that Great Day Christ will say: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have

done it unto Me." St. Paul admonishes Timothy: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord nor of me, His prisoner," 2 Tim. 1, 8. Accordingly, he that departs from the Church of the pure Word departs from Christ.

Therefore I greatly rejoice with our entire congregation that by signing its constitution you have promised to remain faithful to this orthodox Christian congregation.

Oh, do remain true to your pledge! Join us in standing up for the pure doctrine of the divine Word and permit neither your reason nor your heart, nor earthly advantages, nor obstinacy, nor ill will or a grudge against some one to come between you and our little flock and cause you to depart from us. But join us also in separating yourselves from the world, in renouncing the service of sin, and in fighting the gallant fight against the world, your sinful flesh, and the devil.

You will never regret such loyalty; rather, you will rejoice when on your death-bed you will be able to say with Paul: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing," 2 Tim. 4, 7, 8.

May Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Son of Mary, grant this unto you and all of us! Amen.

8. Faithfulness in the Face of Temptations.

He who seeks and finds Jesus does well;

He who makes Jesus his own does better;

He who abides with Jesus does best of all.

These lines a now sainted Christian spoke to me many years ago. Not only did I commit them to memory, but I have never been able to forget them.

I should like to ask you, too, to remember them.

To seek and find Jesus is a simple matter. For Jesus is wherever we hear, read, speak, or meditate on, His Word.

To cling to Jesus is more difficult. For when our guilt weighs down upon us, we are prone to release our grip on Him.

But most difficult of all for a Christian is to abide with Jesus.

The moment some one leaves the world and follows Jesus, the Evil Foe lays his plans to draw him away from Jesus. He constantly walks about stealthily and lies in wait for the disciple of Jesus, endeavoring to fill his mind with unbelief and despair.

Satan also employs the world, his devoted bride, to assail Christians, either to drive them from Christ through mockery and contempt or to draw them into its midst through enticing promises.

Worst of all, however, is this, that, after we have found Christ and obtained pardon through Him, original sin continues to cling to us and like a poisoned fountain causes the deadly waters of actual sins to flow forth; it causes sinful thoughts, desires, looks, words, and deeds to sprout forth from the soil of the heart.

If you have found Jesus, you no doubt have experienced what I have just said.

Accordingly we are ever in grave danger of losing Jesus again after we have found Him.

What shall we do about it?

First of all, we must despair of our own strength; for "with might of ours can naught be done."

Then we must diligently make use of the means God has given us that will keep us steadfast in faith — His Word. But

we must also be instant in prayer. Furthermore, we must guard our heart and watch our conduct.

When evil thoughts suggest themselves, we dare not follow the example of Eve, who gazed upon the forbidden fruit and saw that it was "pleasant to the eyes," which aroused a sinful appetite in her. Nor dare we follow the example of Peter, who mingled with the enemies of Jesus. On the contrary, we must follow the example of Joseph, who fled from his temptress and exclaimed: "How, then, can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

Every time we are tempted to commit a sin, be it pride, fraud, lying, revenge, unchastity, and the like, we should hurriedly call to mind a Bible-text which forbids that particular sin and then hasten to breathe a prayer to Jesus, lamenting our moral perverseness and exclaiming to Him: —

How unhappy the man who permits sin to gain the mastery over him!

How happy the man who has triumphed over temptation!

In conclusion let me repeat to you the lines with which I began my remarks: —

He who seeks and finds Jesus does well;

He who makes Jesus his own does better;

He who abides with Jesus does best of all.

May God in His endless mercy grant this to you and to all of us! Amen.

9. Being Prepared for Judgment Day.

Only he who does not search the Scriptures and does not believe what the Word of God teaches can deny that the final scene of the last act of the world drama will soon have been enacted, that we shall soon see the Lord coming in the clouds of heaven like a thief in the night to raise all the dead

from their graves and to judge the quick and the dead, that the end of all things is at hand, in short, that we are living in the very last times.

The signs of the last times, such as eclipses of the sun and the moon, the falling of stars, earthquakes, wars, pestilence, famine, and the like, have come to pass and should serve us as a constant reminder that the end is near. Even the last sign of the approaching end has put in its appearance, namely, the exposure of Antichrist and the coming of scoffers in great numbers. In his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, St. Paul writes concerning the return of Christ: "For that Day shall not come except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God," 2 Thess. 2, 3. 4. Not only has the Antichrist foretold in these words appeared long ago in the person of the Pope at Rome, but through the Reformation of Luther he has also been revealed as such to all Christendom.

In the third chapter of his second epistle Peter writes: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts." Who can fail to see that in our times also this sign has appeared? Is not the world full of scoffers? Thousands upon thousands declare unabashed, "There is no God." Even devils believe there is a God, but man asserts, "There is no God." But that is not the worst yet — man, created in the image of God, has degenerated into a brute. Books and periodicals in uncounted numbers claim to offer the highest wisdom when they say that we human beings have descended from the ape. The Book of books, the Book of God's revelation unto man, the Bible, which is to make man wise unto salvation which is in Christ Jesus,

is declared to be a book of fables. True, also among the heathen of old atheists were to be found; but they were shunned by their countrymen and compelled to leave the country. For all their learned men declared: "There is a God, and we are His offspring." But in our day those who endeavor to prove that there is no God, that man is a brute, that there is no hereafter, no resurrection, no Judgment Day, no heaven and hell, are hailed as the light of the world. Men and women are shouting, "Away with religion! Down with Christian churches and schools!"

Even many of those who still profess adherence to Christianity have become the victims of soul-destroying errors, so that those who still are on the way to eternal life are like brands plucked out of the fire. Yea, the very men who are still regarded as pillars of the Church undermine the very foundation of Christianity with all the arts of science. Christendom has again been reduced to a small flock; truly, "the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city," Is. 1, 8.

Without a doubt that terrible midnight hour in which the heavenly Bridegroom will forever bar the door to the heavenly marriage-feast is near.

How greatly I rejoice therefore that you have come here to-day to improve this eleventh hour of the world's history by uniting with a Christian congregation, to confess, worship, and serve the living God and the world's Savior. We welcome you with great joy in our hearts. But, alas! many before you have done outwardly what you are doing now, yet inwardly they remained children of this world and servants of sin, or they eventually fell away again and returned to perish with the Sodom of this world.

Therefore I plead with you: Never forget what you have

publicly promised to-day by signing our constitution; be true, oh, be true, to this your sacred pledge! I remind you of the solemn words: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall," 1 Cor. 10, 12, and: "Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown," Rev. 3, 11.

Oh, fight the good fight of faith! Let never a moment find you off your guard. Joyfully enter the race for the heavenly Zion. Never grow weary, never cease running. Above all, hold fast the faith, persevere unto the end, be faithful unto death; then the crown of victory, the crown of righteousness, the crown of everlasting life, will in all eternity adorn your brows.

To this end may we all enjoy the grace and Spirit of our dear Savior Jesus Christ, blessed forever! Amen.

10. Church-Membership a Confession of Faith.

The fact that you have signed the constitution of our congregation and thereby become united with us fills us with joy. We rejoice not only because our membership has thereby been enlarged and our organization strengthened, but especially because we are confident that you have been prompted to affiliate with us by reason of your being true Christians.

The glory of a congregation depends not on the size of its membership, but consists in this, that its members are members of that body of which Christ is the Head, to wit, that they are truly converted, believing Christians. Christ calls His Church a little flock and urges all to "enter in at the strait gate," Matt. 7, 13. 14. Of the ungodly Scripture says: "Therefore his people return hither, and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them"; multitudes of people rally round them. Hence a congregation which every one wants to join and which receives every one who comes along into member-

ship surely is not a true Christian congregation, but a false church, in which the Old Adam finds welcome quarters.

True Christians strive to perform good deeds, not in order to win God's favor and to earn salvation, but because through faith they have received God's grace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation and are thankful for it. The good deeds of true Christians are thank-offerings brought in return for the grace and goodness vouchsafed to them by God.

Consequently, when true Christians unite with a Christian congregation, they do so not because they think that this outward act will make them Christians or in order to earn some kind of reward either here or hereafter; but, being already sanctified and blessed children of God, they want to join those also in outward fellowship with such as belong to the communion of saints, whom he is certain to find in a congregation in which God's Word and Sacraments are administered in truth and purity.

I bid you a hearty welcome into our midst. Let us now also make a united effort to dedicate our lives to God as a continual thank-offering.

Take your places with us in the ranks of the Church Militant and join us in our war against the devil, the world, and our flesh. Christ will keep us in true faith unto our end, so that one day we shall also be members of the Church Triumphant unto all eternity. Would that we were there now! Amen.

11. The Reward of Church-Membership.

With a few strokes of the pen you have just completed a very important transaction. By signing your names to the constitution of our congregation, you have publicly made the solemn declaration that you wish to be voting members of our

congregation and that from now on you agree to be governed, not only by the divine statutes, but also by the rules and regulations which this congregation has made and may make [provided, of course, they do not militate against the Bible].

Permit me in behalf of the congregation to bid you a cordial welcome and to add a few words of encouragement.

On one occasion Peter, who had responded to the call of Jesus to become His disciple, asked the Master: "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefor?"

It was hardly a credit to Peter to ask that question. For what had he left behind? Perhaps his fisherman's hut, his fishing-boat, and a few fishing-nets, in return for which Jesus had until then provided Peter with all the necessities of life. But our kind Lord did not reprove Peter because of his mercenary question. Instead, He assured him that what he had given up he would find with Him a hundredfold and that, in addition, he would inherit eternal life.

Peter's question may engage the attention of one or the other present here at this time. Some of you may wonder what you will receive in return for those things which you must give up to become one of us. Allow me to satisfy your minds in the same way as Jesus did that of Peter.

In five different ways you will be compensated for uniting with our congregation.

Your first compensation is divine approval. It is the Lord's will that His Christians, instead of wandering about in this world alone, should unite with one another and form Christian congregations. And doing what the Lord has commanded is a good deed, having divine approval. Is it not a great thing to know that what we do is well-pleasing to our God and Savior?

The second advantage which your membership in our congregation will bring you is this, that you will regularly hear the pure Gospel proclaimed. In a true Christian congregation divine truth is not mixed with error. There the one certain way to heaven is pointed out and none other. There the Water of Life flows freely from the pure fountain of God's Word. Yea, wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in its purity, the hearers are given a taste of the fatherly compassion of God and therefore get a taste of heaven itself. There the worshiper finds comfort, rest, peace. Can anything more glorious be imagined?

The third advantage which membership in our congregation brings with it is the friendly admonition addressed to you when you are in danger of going astray, the consolation and support offered you when you are in distress of body or soul, and the raising up you will experience when you have fallen.

A fourth advantage is the ready service of the servant of the Word when you are stretched upon the sick-bed. He will call on you and administer heavenly comfort to your soul.

Finally the fifth advantage of your church-membership is that, when death approaches you, a herald of the Gospel will come to you and with that heavenly light dispel the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death, so that you will rejoice with Simeon: "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Hallelujah! Amen.

True, my answer to the question, "What shall we have therefor?" cannot be, Wealth, honor, and a life of pleasure. [But are not the benefits which I have enumerated much greater than these? Therefore —.]

12. Being Rich in Good Works.

When, long ago, the seventy disciples of Jesus returned from their mission of preaching and healing throughout the land of the Jews and reported with great joy that even the devils had been subject unto them through His name, the Master remarked: "In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven," Luke 10, 20.

From these words we gather that the greatest glory which man can have and in which he should rejoice most of all is this, that his name is recorded in heaven, that it is written in the Book of Life. This glory should be a consolation to all true believers [in days of affliction and distress].

But according to Scripture, God has another book besides the Book of Life in which the names of all believers are recorded; that other book lists the good deeds of believers, all of whom will one day receive a reward of grace.

When Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians had praised his readers for contributing so liberally toward his support, he added: "Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account," Phil. 4, 17. It was Paul's earnest desire that on Judgment Day many noble deeds of theirs would be found recorded in God's account-book.

This fact is both a solemn warning and an encouragement.

Many people whom we hesitate to class with unbelievers are not as eager to do good as they should be. They do not pray without ceasing as they should; they do not read and hear the Word of God as faithfully as they should; they attend the voters' meeting only at great intervals, letting others worry and work while they remain at home and take it easy; they contribute less toward charity and the upbuilding and

spreading of the kingdom of God than they should and could; they hesitate when asked to perform some labor of love; they are more unwilling still to accept some office within the congregation which involves a sacrifice of time and energy, happy to see that others are willing to perform such kind acts and accept such offices and marveling at their good-naturedness. They do not exactly deny Christ, but they are careful not to confess Him where they can expect only mockery, shame, and disdain. They rejoice when they see that people are converted, but they themselves do little or nothing to lead the erring to the way of truth.

My beloved, such Christians will be greatly surprised when on Judgment Day the books will be opened and the record of their life will consist of blank pages.

However, those, too, will be surprised, but agreeably so, who have been rich in all manner of good works, which they had not only regarded as insignificant, but most of which they had even forgotten. What a pleasant surprise will be theirs when they will behold that every fervent prayer, every devout hearing and reading of the Word of God, every attendance at the voters' meeting, every generous gift, and every act of love has abounded to their account (Phil. 4, 17) and that for all of this they will receive a gracious reward!

My beloved, let the example of the former serve you as a warning and that of the latter as an encouragement. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully," 2 Cor. 9, 6. How you will rejoice on experiencing the fulfilment of the Master's words: "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly"! Matt. 6, 6. You will rejoice upon hearing the

loving voice of the Savior: "I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. . . . Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things," Phil. 4, 8.

"Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin," Jas. 4, 17.

"Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward," Matt. 10, 42.

[What glorious promises! Let us therefore also take to heart the words: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. 15, 58.]

13. The Make-Up of a True Christian.

By affixing your names to the constitution of our congregation, you have become members of our congregation, or if you already were [communicant] members, you have now received the right to vote. In behalf of our congregation I bid you a hearty welcome.

In view of the importance of the step which you have

just taken, a few remarks at this time will certainly not be regarded amiss.

A Christian congregation is what its name signifies, a congregation of Christians, of true Christians.

True, there is no visible congregation that is composed of none but true Christians; hypocrites are certain to find their way into every Christian congregation. But in the sight of God hypocrites are not actually members of such a congregation, although regarded as such by man; and when they finally become manifest to a congregation as hypocrites, they must, if persistently impenitent, be excommunicated.

Now, who is a true Christian? A true Christian is a person who believes in Jesus Christ with His whole heart.

A person may have Christian parents, may have been baptized when a child, may attend the services regularly, go to confession, and partake of the Lord's Supper, and conduct himself outwardly as a Christian, but for all that not be a Christian. No good work that a person may do, in short, nothing external, makes him a Christian. Everything depends on the heart.

As remarked above, a true Christian is one who believes in Jesus Christ with his whole heart. However, before any one can have reached that point, he must have realized that he is in need of a Savior such as Christ is; he must confess that without Christ he is a lost and condemned sinner; he dare not look upon his sins with indifference, but must be heartily sorry for them and must be sincerely concerned about his salvation. Such concern about his soul's salvation must, however, lead him to look upon Christ's vicarious life, suffering, and death as his only hope; in other words, he must put his heart's trust in Him.

Many there are, however, who have experienced all this,

but who inwardly either suddenly or gradually fall away from Christ.

How can a man tell whether he is still a true believer? The following are the outstanding characteristics of a true Christian: —

A true Christian dearly loves the Word of God —.

A true Christian does not conform himself to the world, neither participating in its sinful pleasures nor being guided by its principles.

A true Christian not only reads and hears the Word of God; he really searches the Scriptures and considers it a great gain to arrive at a better understanding of spiritual things.

A true Christian is not ashamed of his faith, but boldly confesses it before the world and cheerfully bears the shame the world heaps upon those who confess Christ.

A true Christian, though overtaken by sins of weakness every day, does not love sin; indeed, he would rather die than sin knowingly and therefore shuns every occasion to sin.

A true Christian loves those above all his other fellow-men whom he finds to be truly God-fearing people.

A true Christian not only regularly says his morning and evening prayers and not only says grace at meal-time and returns thanks, but he is often moved to kneel before God and to take his troubles to Him in fervent prayer and supplication.

A true Christian does not set his heart upon gaining riches; he is content with what God gives him; and the more God gives him, the more liberal he is with his gifts.

A Christian is not proud, does not seek to lord it over others, does not seek honor before men; instead, he considers himself the chief of sinners and gladly submits to brotherly admonition.

These are the most important characteristics of true Christians.

As you unite with us to-day, look into the mirror which I have just held before you. Do you behold yourself reflected in it? If so, it is well with you. God grant it!

14. Insincere Members Not to be Tolerated.

In the land of our birth [Germany] every effort is being made at this time to keep within the state church all who were born in its midst.

When recently the Socialists and other unbelievers threatened to leave the state church because they did not get their way, the church authorities were very much embarrassed, and they were at great pains to prevent such a break, which, of course, was very foolish.

It is folly to cultivate weeds in one's garden. It is folly for loyal citizens in a besieged fortress to be loath to let the traitors within its walls to leave it; for they are a most dangerous element. It is folly for the officers of a storm-tossed ship to refuse to cast the ballast into the sea; for the ballast will cause the ship to be drawn into the depths of the sea. It is folly not to separate a scabby sheep from the flock; for that one sheep is apt to cause the entire flock to become scabby. But still more foolish it is to try to retain or gain as members of a Christian Church people who are no Christians at heart, merely to increase the membership of a church. For as little as the sheep reform the wolves, but instead are devoured by them, so little can and will non-Christians further the welfare of a church; rather, they will bring about its ruin.

Such efforts, however, are not only foolish, but they are also contrary to God's Word. Our Savior says, Matt. 18, 17: "Let him [the impenitent] be unto thee as a heathen man and

a publican"; that is: Exclude him from the membership of the congregation. When the Corinthians failed to excommunicate a person guilty of incest, Paul censured them severely and laid down the rule that, if one who calls himself a brother lives in works of the flesh, he should be excommunicated. "Put away from among you that wicked person."

Likewise, if some one spreads, or clings to, false doctrine, he is, according to the Word of God, not to be tolerated, much less received as a member. "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed; for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds."

You are being received into fellowship with us to-day because we trust that you are true Christians and because we hope that you will prove yourselves such in word and deed. We trust that, being enlightened by the Holy Ghost, you know very well, not only that the wilful service of sin will exclude from heaven, but also this, that leading a decent and honorable life is not the key to heaven. We hope that you have come to true repentance [contrition and faith] and thus have become new creatures.

God grant that you will not disappoint us, neither as to doctrine nor as to life!

15. The Privileges of Church-Membership.

When a person becomes a member of a Christian congregation, many in our day ridicule him, asserting that he has taken a very foolish step and will only heap shame upon his head. The fact that in our country no one is compelled to be a member of a congregation is hailed by thousands as a great triumph. And thousands of immigrants from our former fatherland count the freedom from compulsory church-

membership as one of the great advantages which America offers over against other countries. They even consider those fools who become church-members of their own choice.

But, alas! also many members of a Lutheran congregation do not prize their membership properly; they rather regret that so great a sacrifice of time and money is required. Theirs is the privilege to attend worship and to partake of the Lord's Supper, but they rarely make use of it. Theirs is the privilege to take part in the meetings of the congregation, to join in the discussions, and to cast their vote; but hardly ever do they make use of it. They look upon their membership as a burden, rather than as an honor.

Such people betray their spiritual blindness.

There was a time when Roman citizenship was regarded as a great honor. A certain captain on one occasion gave orders to scourge Paul. But when he learned that Paul was a Roman citizen, he exclaimed, "With a great sum obtained I this freedom," and when Paul added that he was free-born, the captain treated him with still greater respect. Even so it is considered a great honor even to-day when a city which enjoys rare privileges extends honorary citizenship to some famous person. And yet, dear brethren, such citizenship cannot be compared with the privileges which membership in a Christian congregation carries with it.

A citizen is assured human protection; a member of a congregation, divine protection. A citizen enjoys earthly privileges; a member of a congregation, heavenly privileges. A citizen is part of a temporal kingdom; a member of a congregation, of an eternal kingdom. A citizen deals with temporal issues; a member of a congregation, with eternal issues. A citizen must acknowledge profane persons as fellow-citizens; a member of a congregation is a fellow-citizen with the saints

and a member of the household of God. A citizen at best elects earthly rulers; a member of a congregation, stewards of the mysteries of God. The greatest benefit accruing to a citizen is that under a good government he may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty; church-membership, however, offers something far greater — forgiveness of sins, peace of conscience, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, and finally eternal life. A citizen is the subject of a government composed of mortal men like himself; a member of a congregation is the subject of the Son of God, but at the same time a king, a priest, and a prophet. A citizen may gain honor before men; a member of a congregation is privileged to look forward to eternal glory, to a state of everlasting bliss in the presence of God.

Woe unto those who despise the privileges of church-membership! Some day they will regret it. Blessed are you who have sought and found those privileges. God grant that both you and we may make proper use of those privileges! Then we shall some day be transferred from the Church Militant to the Church Triumphant. God grant this to us for the sake of Jesus Christ, the invisible Head of His Church. Amen.

16. The Duty of Uniting with the True Visible Church.

Inasmuch as you have now publicly affixed your signatures to the constitution of our congregation, I greet you as fellow-members and brethren.

Permit me to add a few words of encouragement.

It is important for every Christian, indeed it is his sacred duty, to unite with a Christian congregation. It is not immaterial, however, what kind of congregation he joins. It is of the greatest importance to him, yea, it is his sacred duty, to seek membership only with a truly Christian congregation.

St. Paul writes: "I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them," Rom. 16, 17. St. John says: "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world," 1 John 4, 1.

What are the infallible marks of a truly Christian congregation?

1. The pastor, the congregation, and every individual member of a truly Christian congregation unconditionally accepts the writings of the prophets and the apostles as the Word of God. St. Paul writes to the Ephesians: "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit," Eph. 2, 19—22. Christ says: "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God," John 8, 47. Again He says: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free," John 8, 31. 32. Hence in a truly Christian congregation matters of creed and conscience are not decided by a majority.

2. Christ is preached in a truly Christian congregation; that is, His work of redemption, His atonement, and salvation through faith alone, is emphasized above all. To the Corinthians St. Paul wrote: "I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," 1 Cor. 2, 2. It is not enough that Christ is referred to at times. No, every

sermon must point the hearers to Christ, the Savior of sinners. The truth is presented in such a way that all, even the greatest and most hopeless sinners, find comfort in it; all hearers are assured of their reconciliation with God and made certain of their salvation.

3. The Law is preached, and the hearers are taught that every one must repent of his sins and must be born again, truly converted.

4. Not only is the pure doctrine upheld, but all false doctrine is condemned.

5. Church discipline is practised, and those who persist in mortal sins and refuse to repent are put out of the congregation.

6. Worldliness and friendship with the world are not tolerated. Accordingly also those are not retained as members who join secret societies and thus halt between two opinions, or, as we commonly say, carry water on both shoulders.

7. All things are done decently and in order. Customs and ceremonies may vary, but everything that is improper, disorderly, and has a tinge of fanaticism must be kept out.

17. The Impossibility of Serving Two Masters.

Luke 9, 61. 62 we read that a man approached Jesus and said to Him: "I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." But Jesus replied: "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." That incident is well worth remembering. When Elisha was called by Elijah to be a prophet, he said: "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee," for which Elijah did not reprove him, but only said, "Go, return." Christ,

however, said to him who volunteered to become His follower: "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God." What did He mean? Doubtless Christ noticed that that man was not deeply in earnest, and He feared that, if he would gather with his relatives for a farewell meal, they would induce him to change his mind.

May you, dear brethren, apply what has been said to your case. Inasmuch as you are joining our congregation, you, too, are saying to Christ, "Lord, I will follow Thee." For joining a Christian congregation is a public declaration of such a one that he has bidden the world farewell, that his faith and his judgment of things are different from those of the world, that he is determined upon pursuing a different course from that of the world, that he places both body and soul at the disposal of Christ, whom he wishes to render lifelong service with heart, mouth, and hands. His prayer is: "Oh, let me from this day be wholly Thine!"

Are those your sentiments? Or do you wish to serve two masters? Do you want to halt between two opinions? Are you bent on dividing your heart between God and mammon, between Christ and the world? Though you wish to be Christ's friend, are you nevertheless reluctant about giving up the friendship of the world? Do you wish to seek both at the same time, earthly fortune and heavenly bliss?

If so, reflect what Christ said: "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God."

Beware lest your own flesh, the world, or the devil deceive you! Compromise Christians, such as would serve both Christ and the world, are greatly to be pitied. They deny themselves some things and probably do much, but not every-

thing, and therefore their so-called self-denial and service have no value before God. The fear of hell prevents them from enjoying the world, and still they fall short of heaven. Christ says: "He that is not with Me is against Me."

But if we take our Christianity seriously, we shall experience little difficulty in gaining the victory over the world, and upon our sorrows, which are soon forgotten, will follow an eternity of unspeakable glory. "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," 2 Cor. 4, 17.

18. Soldiers of Christ.

Allow me to welcome you, who have now signed our constitution, as our brethren and permit me, as your brother, to add a few remarks.

Do you realize the significance of the step you have taken? Thereby you have voluntarily entered the ranks of warriors for Jesus Christ, for Christ's Church is the Church Militant.

Ever since the Lord said to the Serpent in Paradise: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel," this world has been a battle-field.

Arrayed on one side are Satan and his host, the unbelieving children of this world, the enemies of Christ; while on the other side is Christ, the Captain of our salvation, together with all His true Christians.

Accordingly all Christians are urged to put on the whole armor of God, to take the helmet of salvation, to gird their loins about with truth, to seize the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, to have on the breastplate of righteousness, the righteousness of Christ, to take the shield of faith, and to

have their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. (Eph. 6, 14—17.)

Christ tells all His would-be followers in advance: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword." For I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household."

Are you prepared to fight along in this great war?

Are you determined to fight daily against your own flesh, the devil, and the world?

Perhaps you will say: "We are prepared to fight along with you Lutherans, but we prefer not to become involved in your doctrinal controversies. We prefer to interfere with no one's religious views. Content to confess the truth, we prefer to let charity govern our attitude toward those who differ with us."

But, my friends, would that be charity if, seeing a blind man about to walk over an embankment, you would not make an effort to stop him?

Insistence on pure doctrine is an essential part of the warfare against the world, your flesh, and Satan. Would you class him as a quarrelsome man who opposes such as seek to poison bread and drinking-water?

Did not all prophets and apostles by word of mouth and by pen testify against false prophets? Did not Christ Himself continually combat the false teachings of the Pharisees and Sadducees?

Be not misled in these days of indifference in matters of religion.

We have no alternative, we must fight.

Let nothing induce you to forsake the banner of Christ; nothing, to desert His cause. Desertion is a disgraceful act, deserving even as the world judges the death penalty.

Who has not stood the battle's strain
The crown of life shall ne'er obtain.

Let not the fanaticism of Chiliasts deceive you to entertain false hopes. We cannot hope for perfect peace until we shall enter heaven. There all wars will cease, and all warriors will be crowned. The Church Triumphant is not here, but yonder.

Christians are a blessed people, but the nature of their blessedness is often misrepresented. Their blessedness consists not in this, that they are basking in undisturbed enjoyment of God's grace and loving-kindness, not in this, that God always satisfies all their desires, nor in this, that others recognize their happy condition and even envy them because of it.

On the contrary ["we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"].

Wherein, then, does the blessedness of God's children consist? [In this, that through faith in Jesus they are sure of being God's beloved children and of having their sins forgiven, that they experience the comfort and power of the Holy Spirit and consequently peace of soul, that they are sure of their ultimate entrance into glory, so that they exclaim with Paul: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better."]

19. The Cost of Discipleship.

You have signed the constitution of our congregation. In the name of the congregation I bid you a cordial welcome.

But let me ask you, Did you fully consider the step which you have just taken?

Your signature is equivalent to a declaration on your part that you are willing to join us in our pilgrimage heavenward and have promised to fight whenever called upon, and to fight to the very end.

You have made no small promise. It costs much to be a Christian and truly to reflect the Spirit of Christ. Human nature rebels at the thought of being persecuted and put to death with Christ. When one victory has been gained, another battle looms in the distance. You can look for desperate efforts on the part of your flesh, the world, and Satan to tempt and mislead you.

More than once you will be confronted with situations that will make it difficult for you to decide which way to turn. You will notice features about our congregation that will not please you. You will finally say to yourself that the only good things our congregation can claim to have, are the pure Word of God and the unadulterated Sacraments. Many have regretted their step of uniting with our congregation. Like Demas they have learned to love the world. Having partaken of the Bread of Life in abundance, they finally came to the point where they said: "Our soul loatheth this light bread," Num. 21, 5.

Hence it is necessary for you seriously to consider the step you are taking.

When on one occasion a man came to Christ, saying: "I will follow Thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house," the Lord answered: "No man having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God," Luke 9, 61. 62. That man was not quite ready to give his life to Christ. Therefore Jesus declared him unfit for the kingdom of God. On another occasion Jesus said: "Whoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple," Luke 14, 33.

I am not saying these things to depress or discourage you, but merely to test you. However, rely on God's grace, and you may be certain that you will succeed. It is difficult to be a Christian and to live according to the Spirit of Christ. Human nature is reluctant to go into death, if need be, with Christ, considering the cost too great. But with the aid of God's grace the cost is lost in view of the reward.

20. The Cost of Being a Lutheran.

Luke 14, 28, 29 we read: "Which of you intending to build a tower sitteth not down first and counteth the cost whether he have sufficient to finish it, lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him?" That is the Master's response to those who say they desire to follow Him and become His disciples.

These words apply also to you who with your own hand have added your names to the membership of this Evangelical Lutheran congregation.

Let me ask you, Have you counted the cost involved in your step?

"What cost?" you will ask. Let me enumerate the outstanding items making up the cost of being a member of a Lutheran church.

A member of a Lutheran church cannot boast of his own wisdom; instead, he must declare the Word of God to be the highest wisdom; he must become a fool for Christ's sake. Are you ready to pay that price?

Membership in a Lutheran church means that you must cease to set your affection on things on the earth and consider the grace of God your greatest riches. Are you willing to do that?

A member of a Lutheran church must look upon his own righteousness and piety as filthy rags and become a humble sinner before God.

A member of a Lutheran church must renounce the lust of the world and seek those things which are above.

A member of a Lutheran church must utterly disregard all worldly fame and be humble and a lover of peace.

A member of a Lutheran church must practise the art of relying on grace alone and nevertheless conduct himself in such a manner as though everything [his salvation] depended on his good works.

A member of a Lutheran church must expect that in his own life he will experience the truth of St. Paul's words: "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," and: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."

A member of a Lutheran church must be willing to give up all for Christ, even his life. Though not all Christians will be called upon to suffer martyrdom, yet all should be willing so to suffer if it should be God's will.

I am telling you this not to discourage, but rather to encourage you; for if your faith in Christ is sincere, you will ere long realize the truth of the Savior's words: "Take My yoke upon you; . . . for My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."

21. The Cost of Discipleship.

In the 14th chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, Christ warns those who would follow Him not to do so rashly. He points out that a person who intends to build a tower first stops to count the cost before he begins to build and that

a king going to war first stops to consider how large an army he will need to triumph over his enemy. Similarly Jesus urged all who would follow Him to consider beforehand what it will cost them.

In the preceding verse Jesus points out wherein the cost of being a Christian consists. He says: "If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." Again He says: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath he cannot be My disciple."

When you publicly sign our constitution and thereby signify your intention of being a member of our congregation, you are in effect saying to Jesus, "We will follow Thee."

Have you counted the cost of following Jesus?

As members of this congregation you will be expected —

1. To lead a holy life;
2. To bid farewell to the world [not to join in its vanities, not to adopt its principles, not to choose its companionship];
3. Not to forsake the fellowship of true believers.

Would it, then, not be better not to assume these great obligations at all?

Indeed not! For —

1. Your promise is not a new one; you made it already when you were baptized. Even though you would not repeat it now, you would be obliged to keep it nevertheless if you wish to be saved.

2. God's Word assures us: "If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him," 2 Tim. 2, 11. 12.

22. The Joy of Discipleship.

To unite with a Christian congregation appears to many as something unimportant as well as unpleasant.

People argue: If we unite with a congregation, it will increase our expenses and will make the world despise us —

1. Because of the Gospel;
2. Because of those within the Christian congregation who have given great offense. For the world is constantly watching the Christians with eagle eyes.

That such is the case cannot be denied. But also this is sure, that, when a baptized Christian unites with a Christian congregation he is taking an important step as well as one that brings with it much joy.

Recall the words of Jesus respecting the Jews: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."

Christ wants to gather all of His believers into one great fold.

Recall furthermore what Christ says to His believers, whom the world despises and persecutes: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

What a glorious promise!

1. Those who join His fold of believers are to inherit the Kingdom. Which kingdom? [None other than the Kingdom of Grace and Peace here and the Kingdom of Glory and Bliss yonder.]

2. It is the Father's good pleasure, not the reward of their own efforts. Nor is it uncertain; for what God according to His good pleasure has decreed cannot be overthrown.

Therefore enter our congregation with joy. Though we

are despised by the world, God has honored us with a glorious promise, which you, too, are now to share.

And we, dear brethren, who have received these new brethren into fellowship, have a twofold duty.

1. We must receive them as brethren, show them that we love them, never desert them when they are in need of any kind, and make them feel at home among us.

2. We ought very diligently and zealously to guard our conduct lest we cause either them or the world to be offended. We must also see to it that we are not to blame when the world despises us.

23. Faith, Faith Alone, Makes a Christian.

Many think that, if they *do* what a Christian is supposed to do, they are good Christians. Such people are greatly mistaken.

Many things, though expected of us as Christians, do not in themselves make us Christians. Let me cite some instances.

To be a Christian, it is essential to pray diligently; he who does not pray is not a Christian. And yet, if a person prays diligently, that in itself does not make him a Christian.

To be a Christian, we must hear the Word of God diligently; we must be honest in business, truthful in our talk, liberal toward the needy; we must obey our parents, serve them, and requite them as much as possible what they have done for us; we must be industrious in our calling; we must forsake the world and its vanity; we must pay our debts.

[But even if we live up to all these requirements, this alone does not make us Christians.]

What, then, does?

St. Paul answers this question in his Epistle to the Gala-

tians: "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." What he means by that he makes clear in another place of the same epistle: "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith, which worketh by love."

Here we have it: Faith, and faith alone, makes a person a Christian.

And this truth is stated not only here, but throughout the Bible. Concerning Abraham we read: "He believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." Christ Himself said: "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." St. Paul testifies: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law."

But does not St. Paul say, Gal. 5, 6: "Faith which worketh by love"? True; however, in these words he says expressly that faith alone is active, but through love. Love is only the tool with which faith operates.

These very words of the apostle, however, show us that not any kind of faith makes a person a Christian.

Whoever claims to have faith, but does not practise love, is mere sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. He is like a nut-shell without a kernel, a body without a soul. Faith is more than mere assent to what the Bible teaches.

Wherein does true faith consist, that faith which makes us Christians? It is a confidence produced by the Holy Spirit in the hearts of contrite sinners, the assurance that his sins are forgiven [for Jesus' sake], that God is gracious to him, that He has accepted him into His grace and favor, that he is a child of God and an heir of everlasting life.

He that has such a faith need not be told, You must love

your neighbor now, too. This the true believer does spontaneously. He cannot do otherwise. His heart of stone has been made soft. He now wishes no one any evil. He does not want to offend or insult any one, neither to his face nor behind his back. He is ready to perform every deed of love required of him, yea, even such as are not required of him. Whenever he sees that some one is in need of some work of love which he is able to perform, he does it.

Examine yourselves according to this standard.

24. The Obligations of Church-Membership.

By signing our constitution, you have assumed a twofold obligation, the general obligation of a Christian and the special obligation of a voting member of our congregation.

The general obligations of a Christian you assumed already when you were baptized and confirmed, and by signing our constitution, you have merely repeated the promises previously made. Those promises consist in this, that as Lutheran Christians you will believe and confess the truth and lead a godly life.

The new obligations which you have assumed are these: —

1. That you will not absent yourselves from public worship, neither on Sunday nor on any festival day nor on a weekday, unless compelled to do so;

2. That you will attend every voters' meeting unless prevented by circumstances beyond your control;

3. That you will at all times be concerned about the welfare of the congregation and foster it in every way possible. That you will —

a) Give us the benefit of your advice;

b) Always vote for what you consider right;

c) Contribute according to your means toward the support of church and school and of the poor in our midst;

d) When voting for new pastors, teachers, elders, or other officers of the congregation, let your vote be prompted alone by your concern for the congregation's welfare;

e) Gladly submit to admonition from the Word of God; when you see others sin, practise brotherly admonition instead of talking about them behind their backs; and when a case of church discipline comes up for discussion, proceed strictly according to the Word of God;

f) Submit to the rules and regulations made by our congregation, see to it that others observe them, and do all that is in your power to foster harmony;

g) In case doctrinal controversies should occur (which we ask God graciously to prevent), judge strictly according to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

4. That you will often pray for the congregation;

5. That you will patiently bear with the weak in our midst;

6. That you will join no other religious organization; especially not a secret order; that you will not send your children to the non-religious public schools nor have your life insured in companies which practise usury;

7. Finally, that you will faithfully remain one of us unto death or until the Lord may lead you elsewhere.

If you succeed with the grace of God in carrying out these promises, your membership will prove a blessing to others; but above all you yourselves will enjoy the fruits of our vineyard. May God graciously grant it! Amen.

25. "Offended in Jesus."

Christ says: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me," Matt. 11, 6.

Being offended in Jesus may come about in various ways.

We may be offended at His person, at His Word, or at His Church.

This offense may exist merely in the heart, or it may show itself in deeds.

Why did Jesus utter the words just quoted? Because human reason finds many features which cause it to be offended. Human reason may take offense 1) at Christ's lowliness, 2) at His Word, 3) at His Church, a) because it is so small and is despised by the world, b) because its members have so many shortcomings.

Hence do not forget the Savior's words: "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me."

From these words we gather, 1) that God has a blessed purpose in mind when He acts in a manner that is offensive to us or permits His Church to act thus; 2) that those are blessed who despite occasions for offense are nevertheless not offended in Him.

Blessed are you therefore —.

26. Wise and Foolish Virgins.

Affixing your names to our constitution, my beloved, was more than empty formality, more than mere pastime. It was an act of greatest importance. In the final analysis it was nothing less than a written restatement of what you vowed at your baptism; for our constitution asks of you neither more nor less than that you redeem the vow you made when you received Holy Baptism.

In behalf of the congregation I bid you welcome. Allow me, however, to add a few words of admonition and warning.

One of the most solemn parables of our Lord is the parable of the Wise and the Foolish Virgins. We find it recorded in the 25th chapter of Matthew. In that parable our Lord por-

trays the situation within the Christian Church immediately before His return for Judgment. This parable therefore is of practical significance for our times, since the Savior's coming unto Judgment may be expected any moment.

Note that the Savior divides the church-members of the closing era of the world into two groups, comparing those of the first group to wise virgins, those of the second group to foolish virgins.

Christ points out that in three particulars both groups will be alike: 1) Both will go out to meet Christ, the Bridegroom, whose coming will usher in the great marriage-feast in heaven; 2) both will be provided with lamps; 3) both will become weary and actually fall asleep.

The difference, He points out, will be this, that the one group will have oil in their lamps, that at the coming of the Bridegroom they will trim their lamps, so that they will shine brightly, and that they will be admitted to the marriage-feast, while the foolish virgins will have no oil in their lamps and will not think of purchasing any until the Bridegroom comes, and will be barred from the heavenly marriage-feast.

The application of this parable is easily made.

We all belong to those whom the Savior wishes to portray in this parable. 1) We all wish to go out to meet the Bridegroom; we all want to go to heaven; 2) we all are carrying lamps, for we all at least have "a form of godliness," so that others regard us as Christians; 3) we all have grown sluggish and sleepy in these last times.

Who among us are wise virgins? Those whose lamps are filled with the oil of true faith, whose lamps give forth the bright light of love and good works, who even now are certain that, should the Savior come to-day, they would enter with

Him into the abodes of heaven, there to celebrate the marriage-feast with Him.

Who among us are foolish virgins? Those who, despite all outward appearance of being Christians, lack the soul of Christianity, true faith, but who will not become aware of this until the Lord comes and who then consequently will be excluded from the marriage-feast and cast into the dark dungeon of hell, where they will suffer hunger and thirst in all eternity. What a terrible lot! Oh, a terrible end!

In the year 1322 the parable of the Wise and the Foolish Virgins was dramatized for the benefit of Frederick, Margrave of Meissen. Very attentively he followed the drama. When the banquet-hall was locked in the face of the foolish virgins, he thought that Christ would yield to the pitiful cries of the foolish virgins, "Lord, Lord, open to us!" Seeing, however, that at the end of the play the foolish virgins were consigned to hell, he was seized with a terrible fright. When brought home, he was in a fit of despair. All efforts to console him would avail nothing, and in a few days he died, his lifeless body, all distorted, showing the awful agony he had suffered.

Would to God that we all would take to heart the fate of the foolish virgins! We need not despair, of course, since we have the precious Gospel, and the sun of God's grace has not set for us. [Nevertheless we should take to heart the words with which our Lord concluded His parable: "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh."]

27. Conversion Essential to Church-Membership.

By signing the constitution of our congregation you, my dear brethren, have accepted all the privileges of membership in this congregation. In behalf of the congregation I cordially

bid you welcome. I beg you to give me your attention for a few minutes in order that I may have an opportunity to address a few words to you.

When application for membership in human organizations is made, usually the highest requirement is that the applicant conduct himself honorably.

The situation is different in a Christian congregation, which was instituted by God. God, the Founder of the Christian Church, has in His Word decreed what the qualifications for membership in a Christian congregation shall be.

What these qualifications are can be best seen if we observe the first Christian congregation at Jerusalem, which immediately after the ascension of Jesus numbered 120 members. A few days later the number had grown to three thousand, and in a few years there were tens of thousands of Christians. How did it all come about? Did the apostles call on the better class of citizens of Jerusalem and point out to them the advantages which membership in the Christian congregation carried with it, urging them to take up such membership? Nothing of the kind.

The narrative of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit shows us that things came about in the following manner: Peter preached to an immense crowd of Jews, telling them that they had crucified the Messiah. That charge pricked thousands of hearts, causing them to become alarmed about their salvation and prompting them to ask, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter answered, "Repent," that is, undergo a change of heart and mind, and "be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Three thousand obeyed the words of Peter. And lest any one think that their conversion was nothing but momentary excitement, Luke records further: "And they continued steadfastly in the

apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

From the event just referred to we may glean what are the qualifications requisite for membership in a Christian congregation. A member of a Christian congregation must have experienced true repentance, must have become a new creature through faith, and must also confess that faith which the Christian congregation confesses.

We learn this also from the fact that in the days of the apostles those members who became manifest as non-Christians were put out of the congregation, for instance, Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), Simon, the sorcerer (Acts 8), Hymenaeus and Alexander, who forfeited their good conscience and made shipwreck of their faith (1 Tim. 1), Philetus and Hymenaeus, victims of the fatal heresy that the resurrection from the dead had already taken place and was no longer to be looked for (2 Tim. 2), the incestuous man (1 Cor. 5), Demas (2 Tim. 4), who indeed of his own accord forsook the company of believers since he had begun to love the world again, but who, had he not done so, undoubtedly would have been excommunicated as one who had become manifest as a worldling.

Bear in mind, then, that a Christian congregation is not an association of unconverted people, persons who must first be converted, or of such as are spiritually dead, who must first be made spiritually alive, or of children of this world, who must first be made children of God; no, a Christian congregation is an association, or communion, of converted, reborn, true believers.

28. No Neutrality!

Most would-be Christians, though hardly realizing what they are doing, act according to an opinion, that, more than anything else, robs them of their soul's salvation, to wit, that

caring for the soul surely is man's duty, but not his foremost duty. People, of course, like to express that view a little less bluntly. For example, they will say that we must avoid extremes; also in religious matters not too little should be done, neither, however, too much; we must not be too conscientious in this, that, or the other matter; while it would be wrong to neglect churchgoing altogether, to pray, to give to the poor and for the cause of Christ's kingdom, to read the Bible, etc., still one should not become a "crank" in those matters.

Now, it is true, though a man's "zeal no respite know," he cannot earn salvation by means of it. But it is also true that, if one has actually become a true child of God through faith, his heart has undergone such a complete change that he now seeks first the kingdom of God and views and treats everything else as secondary.

Many hold that, being *in* the world, we must be of the world; that though the enmity of the world can in some instances not be avoided, yet we must be very careful not to invite it.

Says the Law (and Jesus approved its statement): "Love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself." That leaves no half-way point with regard to love.

Christ said: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple," Luke 14, 33. That leaves no room for merely a partial self-denial.

St. James says (chap. 4, 4): "The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" — no neutral territory there between friendship and enmity.

Christ says (Matt. 12, 30): "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad" — no middle road between gathering and scattering.

Christ says (Matt. 6, 24): "No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon" — no alternative; one either loves or hates, holds to or despises.

Christ says (Matt. 6, 33): "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" — it is either first or last; there is no other possibility.

True, no Christian will actually attain to the desired goal; but he must strive toward it, according to the words of Paul (Phil. 3, 12): "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus," and as we read Heb. 12, 14: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

The foolish virgins also went out to meet the bridegroom. But their lamps had gone out. And when they stood before the bolted door of the heavenly marriage-hall, they pleaded in vain, "Lord, lord, open to us." They had to hear the terrible words: "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not."

If you would serve God, you must be in earnest about it.

Gladly the world would accept the free salvation offered in the Gospel if it were not for the suffering and disgrace involved. Inasmuch, however, as it cannot be otherwise, let those who would escape eternal pains cheerfully pay the price.

29. Lodge-Membership *vs.* Church-Membership.

It gives me great joy to be permitted to welcome you in the name of our congregation as its pastor.

While the majority of German immigrants turn from the Church to unite with secret orders, you have this evening united with a Christian congregation.

Secret orders have become an awful net employed by Satan to catch souls for his kingdom.

The leaders of such secret orders indeed declare that they have no evil intentions. Why, then, all this secrecy?

They claim that their only purpose is to extend material aid and to practise universal love. Why, then, proclaim that fact so loudly? And why do they promise to aid only one another?

They say no one need give up his own religion when joining the lodge. But why? They want to draw recruits from all the various church-bodies, yes, all religions, hoping that such members will eventually regard the Church as superfluous.

They are content if their members are not addicted to disgraceful vices; they do not inquire into the condition of their hearts.

Uniting with a Christian congregation is something altogether different from joining a lodge.

Congregations, too, are nets, but [nets which divine love has spread out to gather souls for heaven].

When some one joins a congregation, he likewise assumes an obligation, not a new one, but the same obligation which he took upon himself when he was baptized.

Candidates for membership in a Christian congregation are not required to maintain secrecy; instead they are told: "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops," Matt. 10, 27.

"Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God," John 3, 20. 21.

30. Conversion Essential to Church-Membership.

Many think the Church has been instituted by God for the purpose of regenerating and converting those who unite with it. Accordingly, such people hold that no one desiring membership in a Christian congregation should be barred for any reason whatever. Being unconverted should disqualify no one; they assert that it is the duty of a congregation to convert such a member. Christ's words on one occasion, "Compel them to come in," are quoted as basis for such a view.

However, such people are mistaken. The Church, according to Holy Scripture, is the communion of saints. For this reason we also confess in the Third Article: "I believe a holy Christian Church, the communion of saints." Wherever in the Bible we find any reference to the reception of members by a Christian congregation, we find that only such as had previously been converted were received as members. The three thousand added to the Christian Church on that well-known first Christian Pentecost were received as members only after they had obeyed the apostle's words: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

Add to this the fact that the apostle bids congregations to put out of their midst all who live in manifest sins. If such persons are to be put out of the congregation after they have become members, they certainly do not qualify for reception into membership.

While the Church of Christ exists for the purpose of converting the world, that fact in itself requires that its own members be converted, to begin with. True, the Church is to "compel" all to come in, but through faith, by accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The fact that we have to-day received you as members indicates that we regard you as true, believing, converted Christians.

May you by your life and conduct prove that we have not been mistaken in our opinion of you!

31. Luther's Words "Here I Stand," Etc.

By publicly signing the constitution of our congregation, you have declared your intention to be members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Church of the Reformation. You have indicated your willingness to believe, teach, confess, fight, suffer, and die with that Church. Allow me to extend to you the greetings and best wishes of our congregation and to add a few appropriate remarks.

In April, 1521, Luther was summoned by Emperor Charles V to appear before him and the representatives of the German Empire. After he had confessed his faith and declared that he could not recant what he had taught, he closed with the memorable words: "Here I stand; I cannot do otherwise; God help me! Amen."

What did Luther mean when he said, "Here I stand"? Without a doubt this: Here I stand, a poor, miserable, defenseless man. I am at your mercy. Deal with me as you see fit. Do unto me as God may permit. Burn me even as you burned the sainted Huss a century ago. Hang me even as you hanged Savonarola. Drown me. Bury me alive. I am ready to die, but I cannot recant.

What did Luther mean when he added, "I cannot do otherwise"? Without a doubt this: Not pride, not stubbornness, not contrariness, not the disgrace of defeat, is the reason why I will not recant. No, "I cannot do otherwise." What I have taught has been taken from the writings of the prophets

and apostles, from the Word of God. That will remain even though heaven and earth pass away. Shall I deny that? I am convinced in my innermost heart that the writings of the prophets and apostles are God's Word. The Holy Spirit has given me that certainty. In that truth I have found peace for my soul. Therefore "I cannot do otherwise."

How significant the words "God help me"! Without a doubt Luther meant to say: Who am I? Think not that I trust in myself. Were God to withdraw His hand from me, I should be lost. "With might of ours can naught be done."

Why does Luther conclude with "Amen"? Without a doubt, to emphasize his unshakable certainty.

Those famous words of Luther are the battle-cry of all Lutherans.

Therefore I ask you: Can you say with Luther, "Here I stand"? Not before a mighty emperor, as Luther; you are arraigned before the world, before the devil, before the rulers of the darkness of this world, and before your own flesh. Can you say: "Here I stand," O world, O devil, my own flesh and blood; I would rather die than serve you again?

Can you add with Luther: "I cannot do otherwise"? [In my heart I have experienced it to be true that the Bible is the Word of God? By means of it I have found my Savior, Jesus, and in Him I have found peace and life; I cannot do otherwise than steadfastly believe and confess that Word to the end?]

I ask you, Can you say with Luther: "God help me"? [I know that without Him I can do nothing; but Jesus, who Himself has begun the good work in me, will perform it in and through me to the end?]

Finally, I ask you, Can you add with Luther, "Amen"? [Yea, I am certain that it shall be so with me?]

PRAYERS.

Prayers for Meetings During the Festival Season.

ADVENT.

1. Advent — Beginning of Church-Year.

O Lord Jesus, Thou hast again entered into our midst in the new church-year by vouchsafing unto us again the proclamation of Thy Word. Not in anger nor to judge us, but in meekness, to bring us grace and salvation.

Grant us grace to welcome Thee aright, lest through sin, vanity, and unbelief we drive Thee away from us.

Grant that during the entire new church-year our congregation may be the workshop of Thy Spirit and the channel of Thy grace.

Attend our every meeting, also this present meeting, and guide us, that through our deliberations Thy name may be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done. Amen.

2. Two Advents of Jesus — to Save and to Judge.

Lord Jesus, this sacred Advent season brings to our remembrance how long ago, in the fulness of time, Thou didst assume our flesh and blood. Unspeakably poor, Thou didst make us unspeakably rich; coming without glitter or glory, as a servant of servants, Thou didst procure for us glory without end. Weighed down by the burden of our guilt, which Thy Father had laid upon Thee, Thou didst bring us freedom from sin — from its guilt and from its punishment. Grant that we may spend these days solemnly meditating on Thy blessed advent into the flesh, that, confessing ourselves as lost sinners, we may in true faith accept the riches of Thy grace and ever better comprehend its gracious significance for us, finding in it genuine comfort for our troubled souls, and

planting our faith upon it as the one hope of salvation, both here and hereafter.

Some day, O Lord, Thou wilt return in the clouds of heaven; not poor and lowly, but as Lord and King; not despised by Thine enemies, but filling them with fear; not to save, but to judge the quick and the dead. Prepare us to greet Thee with joy at Thy return. Guard us lest we say in carnal security, "My Lord delayeth His coming." Instead, grant us grace constantly to bear in mind that we are sinners, to seek the rich treasures of Thy grace, to lay hold on Thee by faith, to watch and pray without ceasing, and by our conduct to prove ourselves a light and a salt in the world, to Thy glory, whose truth we confess.

If we waver, make us firm; if we weaken, strengthen us; if we fall, restore us as Thou didst restore Peter; and finally when Thou wilt come, as suddenly as a flash of lightning, as a snare, upon all the inhabitants of the earth, oh, then speak to us as Thou didst speak to the malefactor on the cross: "To-day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Hear us for the sake of Thy gracious advent. Amen. Amen.

3. Advent — New Church-Year.

Lord Jesus, again we have entered upon a new church-year. Again Thou hast begun graciously to visit us in Thy holy Word and in the blessed Sacraments.

We give Thee humble thanks for Thy mercy. Forgive us for so frequently despising and misusing Thy means of grace during the past year. Grant us new love for Thy Word and Thy Sacraments and help us to make use of both to Thy glory and our good.

All efforts of the Evil One during the past year to scatter our little flock proved futile. When danger threatened, Thine

almighty hand was our shield. Graciously grant us Thine almighty protection again during this new church-year.

Hitherto Thou hast blessed our meetings; bless them also during this church-year. If we have erred, graciously forgive us and lead us back into the way that pleases Thee.

Vouchsafe unto us Thy presence during this meeting. Guide us, so that we may ^{surely} do only what is right. We ask this because of Thy gracious promise. Amen.

CHRISTMAS.

1. Christmas Joy.

Lord Jesus, in these days our hearts overflow with joy, for we call to mind Thy birth, which bringeth salvation. How could we be sad or doubt our right to be glad? The tidings of great joy for all people proclaimed by Thine angel messenger was intended also for us.

Grant that the joy occasioned by Thy birth may not be quenched in our hearts, but that this heavenly flame may continue to burn and give us strength to overcome all doubts and temptations to sin and to bear our cross cheerfully.

Fill the hearts of all members of our congregation with true Christmas joy, help each one of us to add to the joy of others, and finally bring us all to that joy which no man taketh from us, the joy of life everlasting. Amen.

2. Peace on Earth.

Lord Jesus, Thou Son of God, by assuming our nature, Thou hast restored peace between Thy Father and us poor, fallen creatures. But more than that. At Thy birth the angels rejoicingly sang, "Peace on earth." And before Thou didst leave this world, Thou saidst to Thy disciples: "Peace

I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." How much it must please Thee therefore to see those who believe in Thee to dwell together in peace and unity, to be of one heart and one soul as were those first Christians in Jerusalem.

Thou knowest, however, how easily it happens that, when we are tempted by our sinful flesh, peace and harmony vanish and that the arch-enemy of Thy Church does all he can to sow the seed of discord where blessed peace prevails.

Therefore we beseech Thee to pour out upon us Thy Spirit, the Spirit of peace and love. Then all will be well. Endow us with that grace also this evening that peace may reign among us throughout our meeting. And when our hour has come, grant that we may depart in peace out of this world of storm and strife and graciously receive us into the everlasting habitations of peace. Hear us, Thou Prince of Peace, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

3. Counsel and Strength.

Lord Jesus, we have met in this blessed Christmas season to deliberate upon the welfare of our beloved congregation. As Thou hast during these days abundantly visited us with Thy grace, so let Thy goodness abound toward us also at this time. Thy name is "Counselor" and "The Mighty God," "great in counsel and mighty in work." Let us, we beseech Thee, experience this now. Counsel us who lack wisdom; grant strength to us who are weak and helpless.

Alas! daily we observe how Satan, the old evil foe, who is in league with our sinful flesh and the world, assaults our congregation in the hope of destroying it and robbing its members of the crown of life. Therefore we pray Thee, fight Thou our battles for us. Thou art our Champion, chosen of God. Increase our faith, increase our love, increase our hope, that our congregation may continue to glorify Thee. Amen.

4. Lasting Blessings of the Christmas Gospel.

Gracious God and Father, Thou hast again permitted our dear congregation to celebrate that glorious festival at which we commemorate the coming into the flesh of Thine only-begotten Son. In these days our congregation heard only a message of joy and rejoicing over the wonderful, unspeakably great love wherewith Thou hast loved it, yea, the whole world.

Oh, may these days not have passed by without leaving a blessing behind! Grant that all who have heard the heavenly message again may have been moved thereby to meditate ever more diligently upon the unfathomable mystery of Thy love. Let the fire of Thy love warm all hearts and kindle therein a sincere love of Thee and create a new life in them. Do not let Thy Word, which is to create new life and fill the hearts with joy, become a savor of death unto death to any one, and grant that no one may turn Thy grace into lasciviousness. Make us ever more ready and joyously willing through Thy Gospel to serve Thy dearly beloved congregation. Vouchsafe finally to bless us who are assembled here this evening for the sake of Thy great love with which Thou lovest us in Christ Jesus, Thy dear Son, our Savior. Amen.

NEW YEAR.

1. New Creatures in Christ.

Lord Jesus, Thy holy apostle has said: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," 1 Cor. 5, 17.

It is proper that we bear in mind these words as we meet to-day for the first time this year.

True, those among us who are Thine by faith already

have a new heart, a new spirit, and a new mind; but, alas! we are far from being perfect. Our sinful flesh is still clinging to us. Grant us greater earnestness this year in crucifying our flesh and the lusts thereof.

While we, who believe in Thee indeed walk in newness of life, nevertheless we often, alas! stumble on our pilgrimage to heaven because we do not always watch and pray as we should. Grant us, we beseech Thee, greater zeal this year to follow after that holiness without which no man shall see Thee.

If there is any one in our midst who cannot truthfully say: "I am in Christ, and therefore I am a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new," grant such a one grace to be renewed spiritually. Hear us for the sake of Thine eternal love. Amen.

2. Continued Presence of the Holy Spirit.

Everlasting God, by Thy grace we have completed another year of our pilgrimage and have crossed the threshold of a new year.

In this first meeting of the new year we implore Thee, Thou Giver of every good and perfect gift, to continue to grace our every meeting with Thy presence. Illumine us with Thy Spirit and grant us that wisdom which cometh down from above that we may act wisely in all matters. Sanctify our will; create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit within us, so that in our thoughts, words, and actions we may have only Thy glory, the salvation of souls, and the extension of Thy kingdom at heart. Strengthen us who are weak that we may carry out our good intentions and daily pay Thee our vows. Bless all our undertakings that they may meet with success. Grant that all instruction, admonition, encouragement, pleading, consoling, but also all warnings and reproofs, be received with a willing

spirit. Preserve us from blindness and hardening of the heart and grant that this new year of grace may bring us nearer to the eternal salvation prepared above for Thine elect. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thine only Son, our Lord. Amen.

LENT.

1. Perfect Reconciliation through Christ.

O God, we have entered that blessed season of the church-year in which we hear in special sermons how Thy dear Son, in whom Thou art well pleased, tasted for us the bitter cup of suffering and death. Prepare our hearts to receive that message in an honest and good heart. Grant that the suffering and death of Thy Son may not only impress us with the greatness of our sins, but above all fill us with the certainty that we have been reconciled unto Thee. Greater love Thou couldst not have shown unto us than by letting Thy Son die for us while we were yet sinners, aye, while we were yet Thine enemies.

Fearlessly we may approach Thee now, since we have become reconciled unto Thee; erstwhile enemies, we have become Thy friends. Now we no longer need be filled with fear. Our sins have been atoned for. Thy Law has been fulfilled, so that its threatenings do not concern us who are in Christ. Thy wrath has been appeased, and Thou hast reconciled us to Thyself. Death has been swallowed up in victory. Hell has been conquered, and there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Oh, how great is Thy grace and Thy salvation!

Help us now to do unto others as Thou hast done unto us; to live not unto ourselves, but unto Thee and unto our fellow-men, who have also been redeemed by Thy Son. May we thus give Thee continual thanks for the riches of Thy grace, until

finally we shall bring before Thy throne the perfect offering of gratitude together with all angels and the elect, in all eternity. Amen. *Hear us for thy blessed name's sake, Amen.*

2. Watchfulness. *March 34*

Lord Jesus, when Thou didst enter upon Thy bitter suffering for our sins amid great agony of soul, when Thy soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and drops of blood oozed from Thy sacred brow, the eyes of Thy disciples were heavy with sleep, so that Thou didst utter that plaint: "Why sleep ye? Could ye not watch with Me one hour?"

Alas, the utter depravity of the human heart! Even in believers the sinful flesh is at times still very active. Thou didst pray and labor for us, Thou wast in agony and didst watch for us, until Thy death upon the cross. Even now Thou who keepest Israel dost neither slumber nor sleep, but watchest over us continually. Yet we are unwilling at times to watch with Thee one hour. When earthly interests are to be considered, we are ever alert, but when we ought to hear, and meditate upon, spiritual matters, our souls become drowsy.

Send us Thy Holy Spirit that He may keep us from spiritually falling asleep and continuing in that state unto our end. Awaken us, we beseech Thee, so that at Thy coming we may be prepared to receive Thee with joy and to enter with Thee into the mansions of Thy glory, to rejoice in Thy presence forevermore. Amen.

3. Loving Him Who First Loved Us.

Lord Jesus, how great is Thy love toward us who have deserved nothing but wrath!

Because we have come short of the glory of God, Thou, the Lawgiver Himself, didst put Thyself under the Law, fulfilling it perfectly in our stead, to procure for us the righteousness which availeth before God.

With our sins we called down upon ourselves the temporal and eternal punishments of the just and holy God. But Thou didst humble Thyself unto death, even the death of the cross; by suffering and dying for us, Thou didst bear our punishment to purchase for us grace and pardon for all our sins.

O Lord Jesus, who didst first love us, yea, unto death, grant us grace not to remain indifferent to such love, but let Thy love kindle within us true love of Thee, so that we shall love Thee not merely "in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

Thou hast said: "Ye are My friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." Oh, grant us such love and make our hearts obedient to all Thy commandments, to Thine entire Word, lest on the Last Day we must hear those fearful words: "Not every one that said unto Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that did the will of My Father which is in heaven." Help us to be not only hearers, but also doers of Thy Word, so that on the great Day of Judgment Thou wilt not have to reject us as hypocrites, but receive us as Thy true disciples into Thine eternal kingdom.

Hear us for Thy blessed name's sake. Amen.

4. Living unto Him Who Redeemed Us.

Lord Jesus, Thou sayest to us: "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, and thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities," Is. 43, 24. How great, O Lord, was Thy service, how heavy Thy burden! Thou didst watch and pray for us; for us Thou didst battle, resisting unto blood; agony and pain, shame and disgrace, Thou didst endure for us, yea, even the bitter death on the cross. But Thou didst it willingly, for Thy meat was to do the will of Thy Father.

Thou didst suffer all this that we might have comfort

when our sins lie heavy upon us, comfort when the curse of the Law confronts us, when our own conscience accuses us, when the thought of death and Judgment fills us with fear, when even hell would devour us.

And, oh, may we never forget "what pain our soul's redemption hath Thee, O Savior, cost"! Graciously preserve us therefore from using our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, from continuing in sin that grace may abound. On the contrary, grant us grace to follow Thee and to crucify our flesh with the affections and lusts; strengthen us lest we faint before the battle is won, lest we grow weary before the race is run.

O Lord, Thou must help us, or we perish. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Help us for Thy name's sake. Amen.

5. Fruitful Meditation upon Christ's Passion.

Lord Jesus, at this season of the year we meditate upon Thy bitter suffering for our sins. Let the Lententide be a season of rich blessings for us. Grant us grace to grieve over our sins, which made Thee to serve, and our iniquities, which wearied Thee. Open unto us the rich living well of comfort issuing forth from Thy wounds and assure us that we are redeemed children of God because reconciliation between Him and us has been effected by Thee. Finally, help us to take up our cross and follow Thee, so that, having suffered with Thee here, we may also reign with Thee in the realms of glory. Amen.

6. The Fruits of Christ's Suffering.

O Lord Jesus, how great is Thy redeeming grace! Thou didst suffer that we might rejoice. Thou didst labor that we might rest. Thou didst taste Thy Father's wrath that we might taste His mercy. Thou didst drink to the dregs the cup of

unspeakable agony of soul that we might drink of the cup of salvation. Thou didst fight that we might conquer.

Thou wast mocked and spitefully entreated and crowned with thorns to merit for us the crown of glory. Thou didst die that we might live.

In return for such suffering Thou desirest nothing but that we appropriate unto ourselves all that Thou hast merited for us. Grant therefore that we may lay hold of Thy work of redemption, in true faith, take true and abiding comfort from it, and be impelled by it to love Thee in return and to do unto our brethren and all our fellow-men, who have all been redeemed by Thee, as Thou hast done unto us.

Let Thy cross be our one and only hope and (make of our congregation a true bride of the Lamb, who will love, honor, and serve Thee with singleness of heart.

For the sake of Thy bitter suffering and death, bless also our meeting this evening. Amen.

EASTER.

Acts 10, 34-41

1. Spiritual Resurrection.

Lord Jesus, by Thy glorious resurrection Thou didst triumph over sin, world, death, and devil and from the darkness of the tomb didst bring to light righteousness, life, and salvation. It is Thy will that we should not remain in spiritual death and lie prostrate on the ground, mourning and lamenting, but that through faith we arise with Thee and live and therefore hence no longer serve sin, which caused Thee such great suffering, nor love the world, which Thou hast overcome, nor fear death, Satan, and hell, whom Thou hast disarmed and over whom Thou hast triumphed, making a show of them openly, yea, whom Thou hast made Thy footstool.

Graciously grant that we may believe in Thee with our whole heart, be filled with joy over Thy victory, henceforth live unto Thee, be patient in tribulation, and rejoice in hope, until we shall see Thee in that glory which Thou didst receive of Thy Father before the foundation of the world and in Thy presence rejoice forevermore. Hear us for the sake of Thy triumphant resurrection. Amen. *In thy name we submit. Amen.*

2. Rich Treasures of Easter.

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!" Thus, O Lord, our God, Thy servant David, moved by Thy Spirit, prophesied concerning the Church of Thy Son. During these days Thou hast permitted us again to observe the fulfillment of that prophecy. The glorious message of redemption, grace, peace, righteousness, resurrection, life, and salvation has again sounded forth at this anniversary of the glorious resurrection of Thy Son, our Savior. In comparison with these gifts the world with all its treasures is as vapor that vanishes away.

Thou alone knowest the number of those who during these days have appeared at Thy house in search of the true Easter joy and at the end of the last festival service felt that they had again been richly blessed and therefore were filled with praise and thanksgiving to Thee.

But, alas! our poorly attended services have borne eloquent testimony to the fact that many among us are more concerned about earthly treasures than about those heavenly treasures which pass not away, which Thy Son has procured for us by His bitter suffering and death and sealed unto us by His glorious resurrection.

O God, preserve our souls from famishing while we are seated at the richly laden table of Thy grace. Guard us against merely having the name that we live while in reality we are

dead. Oh, may we not consider ourselves citizens of Thy Son's kingdom while with our hearts and minds we still belong to the world!

Produce within us all that faith which overcometh the world, that through such faith we may arise with Christ, walk in newness of life, fight, suffer, and die a blessed death; through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Savior. Amen.

3. Walking in Newness of Life.

Lord Jesus, in these days we have again heard of the unspeakably rich grace which by Thy victorious and glorious resurrection Thou didst bring to light. Grant that the stream of grace, swelled at the festival of Easter, may not simply gush over our hearts, but rather penetrate and fill them. Like as Thou wast raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so help us also to walk in newness of life. Let not sin reign in our bodies, for Thou hast overcome sin. Guard us against seeking the friendship and good will of the world, who is Thy vanquished enemy, or be conformed to her and walk in her sinful ways. On the contrary, help us to follow Thine example, to fight valorously against sin, endued with Thy power, to overcome it, and being separated from it, to follow after holiness, without which no one shall see Thee. Keep us from making of the grace which Thou bestowest upon us through Thy resurrection an occasion for sluggishness and spiritual death. Let us die with Thee, die unto sin and to the world, and live with Thee unto righteousness, so that ultimately we may share Thy glory. Amen.

4. Presence of the Risen Savior.

Lord Jesus, Thou risen Conqueror, after Thy resurrection Thou didst seek, gather, and show mercy unto, Thy pitifully sad and scattered flock, which had left Thee and fled, and

Thou didst comfort them with the words, "Peace be unto you." To this day Thou art still the same as then. To this day Thou art the good Shepherd, who seekest the lost sheep. To this day Thou art the Head of Thy Church, whose members Thou dost fill with new life, courage, strength, light, peace, joy, and true comfort.

We therefore pray Thee, grant unto us Thy gracious presence. Though Thy presence is invisible, let us nevertheless be assured that Thou art ever near us. Amen.

our deliberation to the honor & glory of Thy name. Grant us the Holy Spirit, so that all things may be done in Thee, through Thee.

ASCENSION.

1. Preparation for Pentecost.

Lord Jesus, upon the completion of Thy work of redemption Thou didst ascend on high and didst sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, send down the gift of Thy Holy Spirit that through Thy Gospel He might bring sinners to faith in Thee, to accept Thy work of redemption, and gather unto Thee a Church that endureth forever.

Send Thy Holy Spirit, we beseech Thee, also into our hearts; for without Him we cannot with all our hearts call Thee Lord, cannot believe in Thee. Without Him we are blind, dead, and hostile toward Thee, wholly inclined to sin. Without Him our piety is nothing more than pretense and hypocrisy.

Grant that the Spirit of Pentecost illumine and warm our hearts that we may properly observe the approaching festival. Above all, however, grant that we may celebrate Pentecost in the fullest sense of the word above and praise Thee, O Lord Jesus, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit in all eternity. Amen.

2. Our Exalted Helper.

Lord Jesus, to atone for our guilt and to reconcile us to Thy Father, Thou didst humble Thyself and didst become obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. But thereafter Thou wast highly exalted by Thy Father. Unto Thee was given a name which is above every name, that at Thy name every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth. Thou canst save to the uttermost all that come unto the Father by Thee. But as great as are Thy power and Thy glory, so great are also Thy grace and Thy gentleness.

Thou sittest upon the throne of the Majesty on high, far above all heavens, and lookest down in mercy upon all who are weak and lowly and desire that Thou aid them.

Unto Thee has been given all power in heaven and on earth, but Thou employest it only to thwart the designs of those who despise and hate Thee and lovingly to seek and regain the erring, to comfort those who are grieved over their sins, to strengthen the faltering, and to save the lost.

Oh, manifest Thyself also to all the members of our congregation as such a strong and mighty, but at the same time as such a gracious, mild, good, kind, and merciful Savior!

Grant our prayer for the sake of Thine innocent and bitter suffering and death and Thy victorious and glorious resurrection and ascension. Amen.

3. Our King and Comforter.

Lord Jesus Christ, we have gathered here as fellow-citizens of Thy saints, as children and members of Thy household. We pray Thee, exercise among us Thy kingly office. Come unto us as a dear father unto his dear children.

Before Thou didst ascend on high, Thou gavest Thine own this promise: "I will not leave you comfortless. . . . I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, . . . even the Spirit of Truth." Oh, send Thy Comforter also into our hearts!

Thou knowest that in our age many go back and walk no more with Thee, and the love of many has grown cold. Grant us grace, we pray Thee, not only to abide in Thy Word but also to increase in that love by which all men may know that we are Thy disciples. Hear us for the sake of Thy love. Amen.

PENTECOST.

1. Inward Pentecost.

Lord God, Holy Spirit, again we have observed the anniversary of Thy glorious outpouring upon the apostles of Christ. Again we have heard that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink or anything external, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. But we confess that we ought to ask ourselves whether we did nothing beyond hearing with our ears of the rushing mighty wind on that first Pentecost Day or whether our souls have also experienced something of that regenerating breath with which Thou hast favored and blessed us through the Gospel. Has not only our body, but also our soul celebrated Pentecost? Did we permit Thee to work within us that which neither human reason nor human strength is able to produce? Did we through Thine enlightenment become cognizant still better than ever before of the depravity of our hearts, and has the Gospel of Jesus Christ become sweeter to us than all the sweetness the world can offer? Can we call Christ our Lord with still greater confidence than before, and shall we

be able to fight the battles against the enemies of our soul with a stronger faith, with renewed zeal, and with greater willingness than before?

O God the Holy Spirit, who searchest all things, even the deep things of God, Thou knowest the condition of our hearts better than we. Therefore we pray Thee to work true repentance in every heart at whose door Thou hast knocked in vain during these days. Say not of them as Thou didst of the wicked generation before the Flood: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh." No, dear Lord; turn not away from them, but knock again and again at the doors of their hearts, until — so we hope — they will open them unto Thee. But upon those of us who thirst for Thee as dry land thirsts for a gentle rain, pour out Thyself in abundant measure; then our hearts, mouths, and all our members will thank Thee with a new and better service.

Hear us, O Thou precious Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

2. Prayer for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

O Holy Spirit, Thou, and Thou alone, dost call, gather, enlighten, and sanctify the whole Christian Church on earth, keeping it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

Whom Thou hast not called out of this perishing world, he still belongs to it. Whom Thou hast not gathered unto the Church of the elect, he is as yet not a member of it. Whom Thou hast not enlightened, he is still in darkness, knowing neither himself nor his Savior. Whom Thou hast not sanctified, he is still under the dominion of sin. Whom Thou dost not keep in the one true faith, he cannot abide unto the end.

Revive, we beseech Thee, our souls from spiritual death

and make of us living stones, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Cornerstone. Free us from all love of sin and make of us a holy priesthood, that will offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable unto Thee through Jesus Christ. Make of our hearts good ground in which the seed of the Word, scattered so abundantly, will sprout, grow up, and bear rich fruit unto everlasting life.

O Thou Spirit of Grace and Prayer, never depart from us until we shall attain to that place where danger will no longer beset us, sin no longer will assail us, all warfare will have come to an end, and we shall dwell in perfect holiness and blissful security, and triumph eternally. Amen.

3. Unity.

Lord God, our dear heavenly Father, in Thy Word Thou dost admonish Thy believing children: "Be all of one mind." "Let there be no divisions among you; but be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." 1 Pet. 3, 8; 1 Cor. 1, 10.

This wrangling world is to see that Thy children are in lovely agreement with one another, not only in their creed, but also in their daily walk. Nor dost Thou want them to approach Thee in joint prayer, praise, and worship if they are at variance with one another.

Grant, then, we beseech Thee, that like unto Thine elect children on the first Pentecost, we may be of one heart and one mind. And let all that we do in such oneness of heart be pleasing unto Thee for Christ's sake and bestow Thy blessing upon it, so that it may redound to Thy glory and the furtherance of Thy Kingdom of Grace here on earth.

To that end bless also our deliberations at this time for the sake of Thy holy name. Amen.

REFORMATION.

1. A Second Reformation.

O Lord, in these days we rejoicingly commemorate the fact that four hundred years ago, when the candlestick of Thy Word had been removed out of its place, when distressed souls sighed because they had no sure comfort when their sins oppressed them, Thou didst arise and didst set them in safety by sending Thy servant Luther, who again brought the everlasting Gospel to the people and made it possible once more boldly to teach the truth. Alas! how poor sinners, surrounded by darkness and weighed down by the feeling of guilt, had sighed for light and consolation! And how they did sing praises unto Thee when the light of Thy pure Word appeared once more and through it heaven's sweet comfort again refreshed their souls!

In recent times Thou hast permitted us of the Western World to receive similar blessings at Thy gracious hands. Here, too, the light of Thy saving Gospel had well-nigh disappeared. Thine elect children sighed and cried for comfort and certainty when burdened by sin and guilt and in the hour of death. And, lo! Thou didst hear their cry. Thou didst restore Thy pure Word and through it didst permit sweet comfort and peace to stream again into hearts that were famishing.

O Lord, grant us grace properly to appreciate what great things Thou hast done for us, to praise Thee for them, and to receive Thy Word cheerfully that it may prosper with us in the thing whereto Thou dost send it. But also make us eager to share with others what Thou hast given unto us, to the end that more and more souls may come unto the knowledge of the truth, that the number of those who gather about the banner of the pure confessions may grow, and that this distant

Western World may become a second blessed land of the Reformation in order that Thy name may be glorified and many souls may be saved.

To that end bless this and all our meetings for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

2. Sharing in the Blessings of the Reformation.

Lord Jesus, three and a half [now four] centuries ago, after a long night of waiting, Thou didst visit Thy children who were sighing to Thee for relief; Thou didst reveal Antichrist and didst free from his fetters all who listened to Thy voice; Thou didst cause the light of Thy glorious Gospel to shine forth again and hast permitted us, too, to be partakers of these unspeakably great blessings.

Now we know what to believe, how to please Thee, and how to die in peace, confident that we shall pass from death unto life.

Help us to put into practise such knowledge. Keep us faithful unto death. Graciously crown us at last with the crown of victory, life eternal. Then we shall give unto Thee alone all honor and praise in all eternity. Amen.

3. Blessings of Reformation Preserved unto Us.

Lord Jesus, in these days our thoughts go back four hundred years, when Thou didst restore Thy Church, cleansing it of the corruptions of Antichrist and adorning it again as Thy bride. Unto this day Thou hast kept it free from corruption and hast graciously gathered us into its fold. For this we thank Thee heartily. We pray Thee, however, let not the abundance of Thy gifts cause us to be filled with satiety and loathing. Rather, ever increase our hunger and thirst for Thy spiritual meat and drink. Preserve us from living in carnal

security and from abusing Thy grace; help us, on the contrary, to be not only hearers, but also doers of Thy Word and to adorn it with godly conduct. Keep us from hypocrisy, lest, having the name that we live, we be dead. Grant us grace, moreover, to take our Christianity seriously: our daily repentance, our faith, the hearing and reading of Thy Word, our praying, in fact, our entire worship, lest it be said of us: "The first shall be last."

Let not the candle of Thy Word be removed from its place, but preserve it to us and our children unto the end of time. Finally grant unto us the end of faith, the salvation of our souls. Then, in yonder life, we shall praise Thee with pure lips forevermore. Amen.

4. Unashamed of Jesus.

Lord Jesus, Thou Son of the Highest, Thou wast not ashamed to assume our flesh and blood and to become our Brother. Now Thou requirest of us that we be not ashamed of Thee and Thy Word, but that we confess Thee and Thy Truth before the world.

We have reason indeed for being ashamed — ashamed of ourselves. How often have we denied Thee, denied Thee in word and deed, denied Thee before mortal men, from whom we had nothing to fear!

O Lord, we acknowledge that we are nothing; we are dust and ashes; we are sinners, encompassed by frailty, guilt, and iniquity.

Increase our faith that we may at all times joyfully and firmly confess that Thy Word is the truth. Increase our love that we may at all times for Thy sake gladly sacrifice honor and favor among men. Give us courage at all times to prove ourselves fearless defenders of Thy Word and honor.

Grant us strength to keep in subjection our sinful flesh, which is inclined to all that is evil, and grant us Thy Spirit in ever richer measure.

Hear our prayer for the sake of Thy precious promises. Amen.

5. Faithful Use of the Reformation Blessings.

Lord, our God, at this time, when darkness and unbelief and error covers all Christendom, Thou hast favored us by entrusting unto us the precious jewel of Thy pure Word and worship.

Let us realize above all things that we are unworthy of this incomprehensibly great favor, that Thou hast granted it unto us solely as a gift of Thy free grace.

Grant us grace, we beseech Thee, faithfully to make use of the gift of Thy pure Word and in word and deed to thank Thee for it. Help us to hold fast the treasure committed to us and to value it above every earthly gift, be it money, power, pleasure, honor, or favor among men, and loyally to contend for this treasure unto our end. But inasmuch as it is futile to oppose false doctrine without also opposing ungodly life; inasmuch as it is useless to strive for truth without at the same time striving for holiness and godliness, enable us who have the true faith also to conduct ourselves as true Christians, so that our light may shine before men, that men may see our good works and glorify Thee, our Father in heaven. Hear us for Jesus' sake. Amen.

6. Zeal for the Word.

Lord Jesus, when three and a half [now four] centuries ago Thou didst bring to an end a thousand years of night by causing the sun of Thy pure Word to rise again, that glorious dawn was hailed with inexpressible joy by uncounted millions;

for that light restored certainty to the doubting, comfort to sinners, strength to the weak, hope of salvation to those in despair. But, alas! only too soon did many who had been blessed with this light grow indifferent and sluggish, thus losing again the blessing which Thou hadst poured out upon them.

Also over us Thou hast permitted the sun of Thy pure Gospel to rise and to dispel the spiritual gloom. But, alas! after we have enjoyed its balmy rays a few years, indifference and sluggishness threatens to steal in also upon us. We pray Thee, do not forsake us, but visit us anew with Thy grace and rekindle in us the first love. Thou dost permit Thy sun in nature to rise again and again in spite of man's ungratefulness; oh, likewise do not permit the sun of Thy grace to disappear from our view. Encourage us pastors to let our voices sound forth louder and louder as trumpets and point out to Thy people their transgressions and sins, but above all, to show unto this congregation the riches of Thy grace, which Thou dost pour out upon all by means of Thy Word and Thy Sacraments. Unto our laity grant open ears and hearts that they may gladly hear the Word of their God and Savior, firmly believe it, receive it in good and honest hearts, and bring forth fruit with patience. Shower Thy blessings also upon our deliberations this evening. Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

End of Church-Year.

Lord Jesus, for the last time in this church-year we are assembled in Thy name.

We humbly thank Thee that Thou hast blessed our meetings in the past.

We must confess that we often did little more than display our poverty, our ignorance, our frailty, our insufficiency, our wicked hearts, and our sinfulness. However, Thou hast at

all times afforded Thine aid, so that our faith was strengthened, our understanding increased, and we were drawn closer together by the bond of love and made firmer in our hope. And even though through our own fault we often missed these benefits, Thou didst at least cause us to become more impressed with our sinful depravity and to leave the meetings more humbly than we entered them. Thou didst at all times keep Thy promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

Add, we beseech Thee, a parting blessing to this last meeting of the church-year.

Pour out upon us Thy Holy Spirit that He may enlighten us to know what is right, awaken within us a desire for what is right, induce us to speak that which is right, and strengthen us also to do what is right. Without Thee we can do nothing. Without Thine aid the things of God are foolishness unto us; without Thy help we can but oppose that which is good. Thou must work within us both to will and to do according to Thy good pleasure.

Be Thou gracious unto us and make of this evening hour an hour of grace for the sake of Thine everlasting love. Amen.

Prayers Dealing with the Word of God.

1. Prizing the Word of God.

O Lord, Thou hast given us Thy Word. How can we ever thank Thee enough for it? Of what profit would be the world and all its treasures if Thou hadst withheld from us Thy Word? After a brief season of enjoyment of honor and glory such as the world offers, eternal disgrace and shame would be our lot in all eternity on account of our sins. Of what profit to us would be all the joys of the world if we did not possess Thy Word? Because of our sins the worldly joys and pleasures we should indulge in for a brief space of time would be swallowed up by eternal sorrow.

Grant that we may realize how great a treasure Thou hast bestowed upon us by giving us Thy Word and that we may value it above all earthly possessions and above all honors and joys of this world. Guard us against negligence in studying, reading, hearing, and speaking of, Thy Word. Create within us a permanent appetite for Thy Word that it may be to us sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. Grant us grace in all matters cheerfully to submit to Thy Word and ever to receive in a humble heart its instruction, its reproof, its consolation, and its correction.

Preserve us from unbelief and error, which in these latter days threaten to engulf all, even Thy baptized Christians. Help us to remain steadfast unto the end, and in the dark night of death let Thy Word be our heavenly light and through it grant us a blessed and peaceful departure out of this world.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

2. Heeding the Word of God.

Lord, our God, as soon as Thou hadst given Thy written Word unto man, Thou gavest this command: "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." By the mouth of Thy servant Isaiah Thou hast said: "To the Law and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (margin: "no morning"). Thy dear Son put into the mouth of the sainted Abraham the words: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. . . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

It is Thy will, then, that Thy written Word be our rule and guide in all matters, that our faith and our conduct conform to it, and that we judge all matters according to it; for according to Thy Word Thou wilt on the Last Day judge our hearts and thoughts, our words and deeds, our conduct and habits.

But Thou knowest, our God, that our natural mind regards Thy wisdom as folly and Thy light as darkness and that our hearts are ever prone to err.

Grant us, we beseech Thee, Thy Holy Spirit and open our eyes that we may behold the glory of Thy Word, experience its divine power in our souls, willingly submit to it in all things, and cheerfully walk in the way which it points out to us.

To that end grant us Thine aid also in this evening hour for the sake of Thy glory and for our good. Amen.

3. The Reward of Heeding the Word.

"To the Law and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them" (margin: "no morning"). Thus, O Lord, Thy holy prophet spoke in Thy name. All men should therefore regard only

Thy Word as their rule and guide in faith and life — not their own reason, which is so prone to err; not the principles of the world, which is wholly alienated from Thee.

Make us willing to subject ourselves to the precepts of Thy holy Word despite the protests of our depraved flesh and blood and despite the fact that the world regards us as fools because of it.

On the Last Day all those who were willing to let Thy Word be their rod and staff, the lamp unto their feet and the light unto their path, will be delivered from the darkness of this imperfect world to behold the dawn of life eternal.

Grant this also unto us all for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation. Amen.

4. Humble Acceptance of the Word.

Eternal, living, holy, and righteous God, who dwellest in the high and holy place, Thou hast declared: "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My Word." We pray Thee, help us to feel our helplessness and to seek our help with Thee alone. Grant unto us hearts that grieve over their sins and hunger and thirst for Thy grace, that tremble at Thy Word and are willing to make it their lodestar in all matters. *guiding star.*

Stablish Thy Word unto us, we beseech Thee, so that we shall say as often as we read or hear it, and say it with all our hearts: "Speak, Lord; Thy servant heareth," and accept not only that which pleases our flesh, but renounce the whole world and all its glory, endure disgrace, contempt, and the enmity of man, lose all our possessions, bear every cross Thou sendest us and suffer misery, yea, die, rather than depart from Thy Word even by a hair's breadth.

Graciously effect all this in us through the Spirit of

Grace and grant that we may remain thus minded unto our blessed end.

Hear our prayer for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thine only Son, the victorious Captain of our salvation. Amen.

5. No Substitute for the Word of God.

Lord, our God, most graciously didst Thou give us Thy holy, unerring Word to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. Preserve us from making our blind reason or the opinion of the wicked world our guide. Grant us grace that by the aid of Thy Holy Spirit we may follow Thy Word alone, departing from it neither to the right nor to the left, until, having escaped all the dangers that threaten our souls, we shall have arrived at the end of our pilgrimage and have come into blissful communion with Thee in heaven. Grant our prayer for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

6. Follow the Word Regardless of Consequences.

O Lord, in this blessed land Thou hast granted Christian congregations the liberty of governing themselves according to Thy Word. We have met at this time to deliberate in Thy fear upon those things that pertain to the government of our congregation.

But again and again we have made mistakes when we supposed that we were pursuing the proper course; we have acted foolishly when we supposed that we were acting wisely.

Therefore we pray Thee, grant us grace to let Thy Word alone be our counselor, the lamp unto our feet and the light unto our path, and to let it decide every matter. Then we shall not err; for Thy Word makes even the foolish wise. If Thy clear Word has been our guiding star, let come what may; even if

our decisions bring grief instead of joy, hatred instead of favor, dissension instead of harmony, even seemingly harm instead of good, we can nevertheless in childlike trust commend everything to Thee. Thou wilt make all things well. For Thou demandest of us nothing but obedience to Thy Word.

Thou hast helped us hitherto, O Lord; continue to help us. Neither forget nor forsake us who in these last times confess Thy Word and endure disgrace for Thee. Keep us from being offended and let us be and remain Thine, blessed with Thy grace; for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

7. Great Blessings of the Word.

O Lord, our God, how blessed are we! Not only hast Thou given us Thy Word, which offers and imparts to us all the fruits of the redemption of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, but Thou hast also opened our eyes, so that we may know Thy grace and in firm confidence accept it. Though the world, the Law, our heart, and our conscience condemn us, what do we care? Thy Word fully acquits us.

O keep us in such faith unto our end and grant that all the members of our congregation may appreciate the great treasure which they possess. Help them and us to triumph over all the attacks of the devil, the world, and our flesh and finally to depart this life in peace and to be received into Thine eternal kingdom. Hear us for the sake of our risen and victorious Champion, Jesus Christ. Amen.

8. Constant Desire for the Word.

Lord Jesus, Thou wast moved with compassion upon seeing Thy people fainting and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd. Even so to-day Thou art moved with compassion

when Thou seest that millions are not in possession of Thy pure Word and Sacraments and wander about in the wilderness of this world without a shepherd. *We*, however, are not fainting and scattered; for weekly and daily Thou leadest us upon green pastures and beside the still waters. For such grace we owe Thee eternal thanks.

But Thou knowest that even they whom Thou satisfiest abundantly with the living bread and water of Thy sweet Gospel are still in grave danger of losing the crown.

When Thou givest Thy means of grace in great abundance, it is just then that we are easily overcome by sluggishness, yea, by a dislike and even loathing of Thy Word, that we say with Israel: "Our soul loatheth this light bread."

And, alas! we must admit that we indeed have been guilty of this.

But, O Lord, as Thou hast preserved us from famishing for lack of Thy Word and the Sacraments, so, we beseech Thee, preserve us also from sluggishness as well as dislike of Thy Word and loathing lest, since false doctrine has not been able to fell us, we lose our salvation through ungodly life.

Perhaps it will be but a little while until Thou wilt come to punish the unfaithful and to crown the faithful. Grant us grace to watch and pray and to await Thy coming with our lamps trimmed. At Thy coming let us enter with Thee to the marriage.

Hear us for the sake of Thine eternal faithfulness. Amen.

9. Appreciation of Spiritual Gifts.

Gracious and compassionate God, when in the days of our forefathers the light of Thy pure Word had for a long time been hid under a bushel, Thou didst restore it to its pristine brightness, so that it again shone upon all who dwelt within

the house of Thy Church. In these latter days Thou hast made also us heirs of those great blessings. Oh, that we might ever prove truly thankful to Thee!

But we must confess unto Thee with deep sorrow that our hearts are so utterly depraved that we indeed rejoice over temporal blessings which Thou givest us, such as silver and gold and other earthly possessions, that, however, they are but little moved to thankfulness when Thou dost bless us with spiritual gifts, with the abundant preaching of Thy Word and with a clear understanding of its saving doctrines.

Take not from us that which Thou hast given us. As Thou didst give it to us purely by grace, even so grant us the same free grace to keep it although we are altogether undeserving.

Arouse us when we begin to nod and ever fill us with fervor to hear Thy Word, to draw from it new life and power, and to follow it with renewed zeal.

Forsake none of us, but keep us firm in Thy Word and faith until at the end of our lives we may truthfully exclaim with the apostle: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." Amen.

10. Spiritual Enlightenment.

Lord, our God, not only the mysteries of faith the light of our reason has not been able to discover, even the Law, which distinguishes good and evil and which originally was written upon the tables of our souls, has faded therein. For this reason Thou hast given us Thy holy Word to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. From the depth of our hearts we thank Thee for this gracious gift.

But since without the Holy Spirit's enlightenment we cannot properly understand Thy Word, although it is plain and clear, and, alas! much less will subject ourselves to it in cheerful obedience, we beseech Thee that Thou wouldst fill our hearts with Thy Holy Spirit to the end that He may enable us to understand it and to obey it in all things.

Guard us against being hindered by our own foolish and depraved heart, by the opinion and example of the world, and by the whisperings of that evil spirit who "walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

But after we have endured to the end, having remained Thy loyal servants in a time of a great falling away, receive us graciously into the communion of Thy saints made perfect, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

11. Doers of the Word.

Lord God, far removed from the land of our fathers and countrymen, we are living in this newly developed strange and distant Western World, which Thou hast given unto us as our new home country and in which Thou hast granted us in abundance the rich treasure of Thy saving Word. We heartily praise and thank Thee for this Thy unmerited goodness.

But in Thy holy Word Thou dost bid us remember: "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and *keep* it." "Be ye *doers* of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." "The Word that was preached did not profit them [the "fathers" in the wilderness], not being mixed with faith in them that heard it."

In addition to Thy precious Word therefore give us also, we beseech Thee, Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not only hear Thy Word with our ears, but also understand it unto our salvation, through faith keep it in an honest and good heart, bring

forth fruit with patience, and receive the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls.

Grant this, our dear Father in heaven, who art faithful, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

12. Enlightenment of the Holy Spirit.

Lord God, our heavenly Father, Thou hast given us Thy Word to serve us as a light in this dark world, to give us true comfort in our distress because of sin and in the sorrows of life, and in our last hour to be the anchor of our hope.

But, alas! some reject Thy Word, and others pervert it. We, too, often fail to value it as we should. We often prefer to let our reason, our heart, and other people be our counselors and the basis of our faith instead of Thy Word.

O Lord God, grant unto us Thy Spirit, who inspired the holy prophets and apostles, the writers of Thy Word, that He may enlighten our understanding, stablish Thy Word unto us, and so guide our hearts that we may sincerely love it and be governed by it in all matters in order that on the Last Day we may be judged mercifully according to it. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

13. Appreciating Extraordinary Privileges.

Lord Jesus, to Thy church at Philadelphia Thou didst say: "Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown." The same words Thou dost address to our congregation. Unto us, too, Thou hast graciously given many blessings which have been withheld from other churches: the preaching of Thy pure Word, the administration of Thine unadulterated Sacraments, a clear and saving

knowledge of the doctrines revealed in Scripture, the certainty that what we are taught is based upon it, church practise and discipline according to Thy Word, and the precious liberty to exercise all these privileges.

Grant us grace to be truly appreciative of the precious treasure which Thou hast committed unto us, to thank Thee for it from the depth of our hearts, to use it faithfully, and to hold fast to it and keep it, despite all the temptations of the world, the devil, and our own sinful flesh and blood.

The war that we must wage against the enemies of our soul will last only a short time. Then Thou wilt come and give unto us the crown which Thou hast laid up for us in heaven.

O let us not be numbered with those who draw back unto perdition, but rather with those who abide in faith, love, hope, patience, and in the confession of Thy name and ultimately save their souls.

Hear us for Thy name's sake. Amen.

14. Self-Glorification.

Lord Jesus, while uncounted millions still dwell in the darkness of heathendom and in the shadow of death, we are permitted to dwell here in the light of Thy saving Gospel. While in these latter times, thousands upon thousands who have been baptized in Thy name, though seeing the light of Thy Word, nevertheless do not see it and, though hearing it, fail to understand it, we must confess with Peter: "We have believed and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But we have no reasons to boast and to look down upon the spiritually blind world. We did not seek Thee, but Thou didst seek us. We did not lay hold of Thee, but Thou didst

lay hold of us. That we believe the Bible to be Thy Word is solely a work of Thy grace.

O Lord, who hast begun the good work within us, continue it until Thou hast completed it and we shall see Thee face to face.

Bless also our meeting this evening, so that all our deliberations may redound to the salvation of our souls. Hear us for the sake of Thine eternal saving love with which Thou encompassed all men. Amen.

15. Divine Help Implored.

Lord Jesus, Thou, and Thou alone, who didst fulfil the Law, didst suffer and die, and didst rise again to redeem mankind, hast founded this congregation by means of the Gospel, through which Thy Holy Spirit has called and gathered it. Thou alone canst also keep it in the true faith and grant it grace to grow in knowledge, faith, love, and in all virtues. We cannot keep ourselves in Thy kingdom, much less others.

Therefore we pray Thee, Thou Author and Finisher of our faith, preserve unto us Thy Word and Sacrament, the sole means of grace, and let Thy Spirit be poured out over us through them that we may comprehend the things of the Spirit, that from the Law we may learn to know the holy, eternal will of our God and with contrite hearts acknowledge our immense sin and guilt, and from Thy Gospel learn to know Thee as our only Mediator and Redeemer.

Bring to naught all the counsels of darkness and keep us henceforth from evil as Thou hast done hitherto. Let not darkness engulf us, but let Thy heavenly light shine ever more brightly in our midst. Let us not become sluggish, but more zealous; not earthly-minded, but more heavenly-minded; not carnal, but daily more spiritual.

Renew and refresh us with a gentle rain of Thy grace and bless us unto the eternal glory of Thy name, unto the eternal welfare not only of our brethren in faith, but of all men, — for Thou hast redeemed them all, — and unto the saving of our own souls. Amen.

16. God's Word Must Be Our Guide.

Lord Jesus, upon the completion of Thy work of redemption Thou didst not remain visibly present with Thy disciples to teach, instruct, and lead them. But Thou gavest them Thy Word that it might be their counselor.

Grant therefore that in all matters of faith and conduct we do not ask our reason, our heart, our desires, or the spiritually blind world for advice. Let Thy Word be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, the basis of our judgment, and the final answer to every question.

Experience has taught us innumerable times that, if we would be our own guides, we shall be misled; if we do what others advise us to do, that we easily go astray. But if we follow the standards of Thy Word, we are certain of pursuing the right course, the course that meets with Thine approval, and of reaching the coveted goal, everlasting bliss. Thou art not only Truth and Faithfulness; Thou art Love, Goodness, Grace, and Compassion. Let us therefore not depart from Thee, neither to the right nor to the left, until we shall finally see Thee face to face to abide in Thy presence forever and ever. Amen.

17. Following the Light of God's Word.

Eternal and living God, in the beginning Thou didst create man in Thine image and didst fill his soul with the light of perfect knowledge of Thy will. But, alas! we have fallen into

sin and now, unless Thou dost enlighten us anew, we are completely enshrouded by darkness. Yea, even after Thou hast shed abroad Thy light within us, much darkness still remains within our souls, so that we only too often regard evil as good and good as evil.

Therefore Thou hast given us Thy holy Word to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, and in this Thy Word Thou admonishest us to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of Thine.

O keep us from walking in the darkness of our hearts, which are always inclined to evil. Let us not choose that which seems good to us, but let Thy testimonies ever be our counselors, and let us follow their light.

Lord God, we know that, unless we "speak according to the Law and to the testimony," we shall not behold the dawn of eternal life; that whosoever is unwilling to be guided by Thy Word, will on the Last Day be judged and condemned by it; that whosoever rejects Thy Word will be rejected by Thee. O give us a heart therefore that bows to Thee in order that on Judgment Day Thou must not reject us as Thine enemies, but canst accept us for the sake of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Mediator. Amen.

18. Bible Society.

O Lord, Thou didst not only have Thine inspired and enlightened messengers, the prophets and apostles, proclaim Thy precious Word to the people of their day, but hast also instructed them to record it for us, and Thou hast given us the precious promise: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law [Thy Word] till all be fulfilled." Thereby Thou hast opened unto all people of all times a source of light and truth, of comfort and

peace, of life and power. Thereby Thou hast provided for all an absolutely sure guide to salvation, a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path, a criterion, or touchstone, that will guard even the simple-minded against fatal error, a Holy of Holies into which all may enter and ask and hear Thee. "It is written!" every Christian can now triumphantly exclaim when tempted and assailed by his own flesh, the world, and Satan.

But, alas, O Lord, how many there are who are still without the unspeakably great treasure of Thy Word! Tyrannical priests are still closing unto many the gate leading into this paradise of grace. How many still pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death without this comforting rod and staff!

Bless, O bless, therefore, we beseech Thee, the work of disseminating Thy written Word, the promoting of which has been our object in organizing this society and which has also brought us here to-day.

Thou knowest how sluggish our hearts are and how easily our zeal grows cold. Grant unto us therefore genuine glowing love, a love that will never grow cold or weary.

Thou knowest how Satan and the world oppose all efforts to save sinners. O break, we pray Thee, every evil counsel and will that would not let Thy name be hallowed nor Thy kingdom come.

Above all, awaken within us true zeal to search Thy Word, into which Thou hast deposited eternal life and in which Thou dost testify of Thy dear Son, to the end that Thy Word may save us and that we finally may attain unto that place where we shall behold Thee face to face. Amen.

Prayers Treating of the Christian Church.

1. The Frailty of the Church.

In Thy Word, O Lord, Thou hast said of Thy Church: "The King's daughter is all glorious within." Thereby Thou hast indicated that, like unto her invisible Head, Thy Church appears to the world as having no form or comeliness; that her glory is within rather than without, consisting of "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

We have experienced the truth of these words. Also among us Thou hast gathered unto Thyself a holy church. It, too, is glorious within, but without it is sullied and disfigured, full of sin and disgrace. Satan ever attempts to mar its beauty by having such as are no sincere Christians mingle with the true flock or seducing erstwhile good members to become unfaithful. Oh, sometimes we must bear so much shame and disgrace that we feel as though our hearts would break!

O Lord, graciously look down from heaven upon us. Let not our enemies triumph over us. Let them not shout: "She is fallen, never again to rise!" Help us to rise again, heal our wounds, remove from us every stain, help us to lead a godly life, to let our light shine before the world. Grant true repentance to those who have fallen. Quicken the spiritually dead. Strengthen the weak. Grant that the hearts of the fathers be turned to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers that Thy name may be honored, that many may be drawn to hear Thy Word, and that we all may be saved; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

2. A Christian Congregation Must Deserve Its Name.

Lord Jesus, by means of Thy Word Thou hast graciously gathered Thy Church from the midst of this fallen, sinful, lost, and condemned world, and it is Thy will that the members of Thy Church no longer run with the world to the same excess of riot, that it be not conformed to the world, but in word and deed be separate from it.

In Holy Baptism Thou didst sanctify and cleanse Thy Church with Thy blood. Accordingly Thou desirest that those who are members of Thy Church, by a godly conduct and an earnest striving after holiness, give evidence of the righteousness and holiness which it has received of Thee.

True, Thou hast told us in Thy Word that in the field of Thy Church the tares of the sinful and ungodly ways of the world will always be found. Nevertheless it is Thy will that Thy Church earnestly strive to hinder the growth of such tares by teaching and admonishing, pleading and imploring, threatening, warning, and rebuking, and, if all these methods fail, by retaining the sins of the impenitent and declaring unto them God's wrath.

We pray Thee, grant that our congregation not only be called Thy holy church, but in reality be such; that it not only preach Thy pure Word, but ever become more fruitful in good deeds; that its light become ever brighter in these last dark days; that the blessings it dispenses become ever more abundant; and that it ever oppose, and maintain the mastery over, every evil that raises its head in our midst.

Grant that all of us who are members of this congregation may adorn Thy Gospel with a godly conduct until by Thy grace we obtain the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. Amen.

3. Genuine Church-Membership.

Lord Jesus, wherever Thy Word is preached and the holy Sacraments are administered, Thou gatherest unto Thyself a church, a Christian congregation. There Thou erectest a temple, a house of God, built of living stones and founded upon Thee, the Rock of Ages. There Thou wooest unto Thee a pure virgin and spotless bride, who, denying the world, is wedded to Thee alone. There Thou preparest for Thyself a fine wheat-field.

But among the wheat there are also tares, among the wise there are also foolish virgins; yea, even manifest enemies of Thy Word at times pose as Thy disciples.

Keep every one of us from hypocrisy, belonging to Thy Church only outwardly and inwardly still belonging to the world, being unwilling therefore to forsake the service of unbelief and sin.

If there are any among us who are still in such a deplorable state, we beseech Thee graciously to convert them. And if there are those among us who will not be converted, make them manifest as such, we pray Thee. Deliver us from hypocrites, from all false brethren and despisers of Thy grace, until Thou wilt finally deliver us fully from all sins and offenses and lead us into the mansions above, where holiness and righteousness will have perfect sway forever. Amen.

4. Laborers for the Harvest.

Lord Jesus, after Thy glorious resurrection Thou didst command Thy disciples: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." In obedience to Thy command they went forth and gathered great multitudes into Thy holy Church. But, lo! after eighteen hundred years immense terri-

tories are still to be found where darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people; even in our day millions still dwell in darkness and benighted heathendom and in the shadow of death.

Send therefore also at the present time, we beseech Thee, an ever new supply of laborers into Thy great harvest and grant us a joyful willingness to do our part to further Thy great cause.

In Thy Word Thou hast said: "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?" Make us willing therefore to provide adequately for our educational institutions, in which young men are prepared for the work in Thy vineyard, and bless all our efforts and our offerings unto the salvation of many souls. Amen.

5. Care of the Young People.

Lord Jesus, again we are assembled here to remind ourselves of the sacred duty which we have toward the young people growing up in our midst, whom Thou hast entrusted to our care.

Grant that our darkened understanding be enlightened by Thy Spirit that we may perceive what is right also in this matter. Grant furthermore that our will, which by nature is dead and hostile toward Thee and even now is still sluggish in spiritual matters, may by Thy grace and power be awakened, trained, moved, and strengthened willingly and gladly to do that which Thy Word tells us is pleasing unto Thee.

What a disgrace it would be for us, and how could we face Thee on Judgment Day, if we, to whom Thou hast given Thy pure, unadulterated Word, and given it so abundantly,

were not willing to act differently from those who still dwell in darkness and the shadow of death or to whom at best Thy Word remains a book sealed with seven seals? Even now Thou wouldst punish us for such unthankfulness by taking the treasure of Thy Word from us and entrusting it to others, and hereafter we would have to hear Thy verdict: "I never knew you as Mine own; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity!"

We humbly pray Thee not to look upon our past sins nor to forsake us on their account, but abide with us, Lord, abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.

Hear our prayer for the sake of Thy glorious resurrection. Amen.

6. Church Discipline.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou hast appointed each Christian congregation to sit in judgment upon its members. But in such judgment the congregation is not to respect persons nor to follow its own mind; no, it is to be guided by Thy sacred written Word alone. And if it is guided by that divine rule and standard, Thou hast promised to ratify in heaven what it does on earth, to loose those whom it looses and to bind those whom it binds; and on that terrible day Thou wilt carry out in mercy and justice the verdict it returned here on earth.

Grant that we, Thy little flock, may be just judges and allow Thy Word alone to decide matters.

Above all grant that we all may cheerfully agree to be dealt with according to Thy Word whenever we have sinned, yea, that we judge ourselves in order that we may not be judged on Judgment Day, but hear the blessed verdict: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Hear us for the sake of Thy mercy. Amen.

7. The Church to Be a Blessing Also to the World.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast established Thy Church on earth not merely for its own sake, but also for the sake of those without. Thy Church is not merely to be saved itself, but also to lead unto salvation those who still dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death; to be a light to those without, to dispel the darkness of error which encompasses them, to be a salt that will preserve them from utter spiritual decay, to be a leaven for them by leading a new, a holy life.

Also us of this city and of this nation Thou hast called for this high and holy purpose.

O grant that we may be a blessing unto the world; that we be not conformed to the world about us by serving Satan and sin; that we may not, while confessing Thy saving Truth before the world with our mouths, at the same time offend it with our conduct, but walk so that it may behold in our daily walk the saving, regenerating, renewing, and sanctifying power of Thy Word.

To that end pour out Thy Holy Spirit abundantly upon all, upon pastors and hearers in our churches, upon teachers and pupils in our schools, upon parents and children in our homes, so that we who call ourselves Thine own here may be acknowledged by Thee as Thine own yonder in the presence of Thy Father.

Hear us, Lord Jesus, in order that Thy holy name may be hallowed. Amen.

8. Pardon — Renewed Faithfulness.

Lord God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only didst Thou gather our beloved congregation about Thy Word, but Thou hast also kept it steadfast in the confession of the truth. Who are we that Thou shouldst do such great things

just for us? We are nothing but sinful dust. Therefore we laud and praise Thee now, and shall do so in all eternity, for the excellency of Thy grace bestowed upon us.

We pray Thee, continue to show us Thy favor. Deal not with us according to our iniquities and punish us not for the sluggishness, the lukewarmness, the sin of satiety, and worldliness found among us nor for such sinful acts of some of our members as have given offense even to the world. Forsake us not because of these sins, but abide with our congregation. Grant us grace to return to our first love and to do the first works.

Grant also that we who have been entrusted with an office in our congregation may perform the duties of our office faithfully and thus can be used by Thee as instruments in effecting a wholesome awakening in our congregation, to the glory of Thy name and the welfare of every soul in our midst; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

9. Appreciating Privileges. *

Lord God, heavenly Father, we laud and praise Thy holy name for being merciful to us in that Thou didst not only permit us to be born within the holy Christian Church, while millions are still sitting in the darkness of heathendom and dwell in the shadow of death, being without God and without hope in the world, but didst also lead us into that Church which has been cleansed of idolatry and the comfortless teachings of man.

How thankful we ought to be to Thee for this Thy grace!

How diligently we ought to use that which Thou hast given unto us and denied to others!

How earnestly we ought to strive to grow in the knowledge of Thy revealed truth!

How zealous we ought to be to retain Thy Word pure and unadulterated among us!

How abundant ought to be the fruits of a new life brought forth by us after Thou hast sown the heavenly seed into our hearts!

O Lord, enter not into judgment with us, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified. Deal with us not after our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities, but like as a father pitieth his children, so, O Lord, do pity us.

Also, however, grant us grace, we beseech Thee, to put on the new man every day and return to our first love, until finally, when we shall have run our course and the good fight we have fought shall be ended, we shall obtain the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

10. Christianity to be Taken Seriously.

Lord, our God, Thou dost honor every congregation which by Thy saving Word has been called into existence by addressing it as "the saints and the elect in Christ Jesus." However, in reality Thou dost apply that name only to those members who have been effectually called by Thy Word, whom Thy Holy Spirit has sanctified in true faith, and who by the power of Thy grace have been called out of the godless and condemned world into Thy invisible Kingdom of Grace. For, alas! even in those congregations in which Thy pure Word is in use there are to be found many who hear Thy Word with their ears, but do not understand it with their hearts or who receive Thy Word gladly, but in time of temptation fall away or who have been regenerated by Thy Word, but permit the affairs of this world to choke the good work which Thou hast begun in them.

O Lord, our God, help us to understand whereunto Thou hast called us, not only to hear Thy Word, but also to receive it in honest and good hearts; not only to receive it with joy, but also to keep it; not only to be called out of the world, but also to be separated from the world at heart, to let our light shine, and to bring forth fruit with patience.

O guard us all against trifling with Thy grace and help us to realize that Thy grace can be forfeited and received in vain, so that on the great Day of Judgment not one of us may be shown to have been a hypocrite nor be obliged to hear out of Thy mouth the terrible sentence: "Depart from Me; I have never known you, ye that work iniquity!"

Help us rather to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, to take our Christianity seriously, so that on the day of Thy second coming Thou mayest receive us graciously as Thy faithful servants.

Hear us, O Lord, our God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

11. Faithful to Our Trust.

Lord Jesus, of old Thou didst graciously commit the vineyard of Thy Church to the care of the children of Jacob. But in Thine anger Thou tookest it away from them again because they refused to bring unto Thee its fruits. We humbly thank Thee for the grace vouchsafed us in committing the vineyard of Thy Church of these latter days to our care. We fervently pray Thee to keep us from following the example of Israel in refusing Thee the fruits of Thy vineyard lest Thou be compelled to take Thy vineyard also from us.

Grant, we beseech Thee, that in our midst all the servants of Thy Word may at all times, "publicly and from

house to house," zealously proclaim Thy Word without any adulteration, wisely divide it, and administer Thy Sacraments as Thou hast instituted them. Grant furthermore that all of us who at this place unite in using Thy Word and Sacrament may ever value these means of grace as our greatest treasure, humbly submit to Thy Word, accept it in firm faith, and as Thine elect live a pious and holy life according to it, until finally we shall be transplanted into the vineyard of Thy Kingdom of Glory.

Grant our prayer, Lord Jesus, and bless our deliberations at this time for Thine own sake. Amen.

12. Mutual Helpfulness.

Lord Jesus, it is Thy will that those who believe in Thee are not to remain isolated, but that they shall gather about Thy Word, foster intimate fellowship, serve one another with their gifts, and not only teach, admonish, warn, and comfort, but also reprove one another.

O grant us grace thus to serve one another, so that none of us will say as did wicked Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" but that every one will be concerned about his brother's soul as much as about his own.

Grant, too, that we may always be willing not only to be instructed, admonished, warned, and comforted, but also to be reproved by our brethren.

Alas! we are so prone to go astray without knowing it. We so easily commit a sin without becoming aware of it, or if we do see our error, our hearts nevertheless remain indifferent, cold, dead, without genuine repentance, and thus we incur Thy displeasure and plunge ourselves into eternal death and damnation.

Bless, we beseech Thee, this meeting unto the end that as truly Good Samaritans we may pour into the wounds inflicted by flesh, world, and Satan first the smarting wine of Thy Law and then the soothing oil of the Gospel, so that all the wounded in our midst may recover.

Hear us, Lord Jesus, Thou heavenly Good Samaritan, for the sake of Thy saving love. Amen.

13. Living Members of Christ's Body.

Lord Jesus, Thou Son of our heavenly Father, by Thy coming into the world Thou didst found a Church on earth of which Thou hast said that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," that Thou wilt be with it alway, even unto the end of the world, and that it is its Father's good pleasure to give it the Kingdom.

Thou hast called also us into the holy and blessed fellowship of Thy Church. For such grace we thank Thee with our whole heart.

But Thou Thyself hast said: "Many are called, but few are chosen." For, alas! many who are invited do not come, many who do come do not remain, or if they do remain in the outward communion of the Church, nevertheless refuse to wear the wedding garment of faith that worketh by love. We pray Thee, have compassion upon us. Do not only keep us with Thy Church, but grant that we may be, not dead, but living members of Thy spiritual body; not foolish, but wise virgins, who have the oil of faith in the lamps of their hearts; not corrupt trees, bringing forth corrupt fruit, but good trees, bringing forth good fruit.

Effect all this in us through Thy Holy Spirit for the sake of Thy coming into the world. Amen.

14. Steadfastness.

Lord Jesus, Thou alone wast able to found Thy Church on earth; Thou alone, too, canst preserve it and grant it growth and prosper its work. All the wisdom and learning, all the power and planning, of men would have been in vain here.

Not only, however, art Thou alone able to preserve and bless Thy Church, Thou art also determined to do so. Thou hast promised to stand by Thy Church to the end of days and hast given the assurance that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

We therefore pray Thee to have compassion also on our congregation.

Thou hast done much for us. Thou hast saved us from error's maze and from temporal difficulties; Thou hast forgiven us much; Thou hast led us safely through great dangers; Thou hast showered rich blessings upon us, imparting to us great gifts; with the bright light of the pure Gospel Thou hast dispelled the darkness that surrounded us. But, alas, how unfaithful and ungrateful we have so often been in return!

We shudder to behold how we are going backwards instead of forwards; our faith is growing weaker, our love less warm, the light of our understanding dimmer, our zeal less fervent; but our love of temporal things is growing, our sins, known to Thee better than to ourselves, are being multiplied a thousandfold.

Oh, may our misery move Thee to pity! Pour out upon us anew, and more abundantly, Thy Holy Spirit and fill us all with a holy fear and trembling lest we wander from the right way, be defrauded by the world, our own flesh, and the devil, and thus lose the crown of life.

Unless Thou help us, we are hopelessly lost. Therefore we plead with Thee graciously to aid us. Our hearts will then

rejoice anew, and we will thank Thee and bring Thee offerings of love that will be acceptable to Thee.

Hear us, O Lord Jesus Christ, for the sake of Thy saving name. Amen and Amen.

15. Bewaring of Loosening the Tie that Binds.

We praise and thank Thee, O faithful God, that in these last days of sore distress, in which the godly man ceaseth and the faithful fail from among the children of men, Thou hast called us by the Gospel and gathered us into a congregation of Thy dear Son.

Grant that we may gratefully realize what great abundance of Thy grace Thou hast bestowed upon us, what rich blessings and what glorious possessions Thou hast thus given, more so than to millions of others.

Keep us from underestimating our blessings when called upon to bear the burdens which discipleship naturally brings with it and grant us grace to bear with joy the burden of love which Thou hast laid upon our shoulders.

And while it is day, make us willing to see to it that the bond which unites us may not be slackened, but be drawn ever closer and from day to day yield increased blessings for time and for eternity.

Finally preserve us from becoming tares in the field of Thy Church. May we be pure wheat; that is, may we belong not only to those who are called, but also to those who are chosen; may we not only say, "Lord, Lord," but also do Thy will. To that end grant us Thy Holy Spirit; may He keep us in the true faith, sanctify, renew, and make us strong in Thee and in the power of Thy might.

Hear us and bless our present gathering for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

16. Supporting the Church.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou invisible Head of the Church, which Thou alone hast founded, dost build, protect, and preserve, we realize that "with might of ours can naught be done."

Thou hast chosen Thy Church, Thy believers, to be Thy bride and the mother of Thy children. From her, as the dew from the womb of the morning, Thou wilt have children born unto Thee. Also us, Thy believers, Thou desirest to be Thine instruments in building Thy holy Church.

Grant us grace to understand what is our calling and faithfully to discharge our duties, to aid by word and deed, that Thy Church may continue among us and be passed from us to our children as it was passed from our fathers to us. Render our hearts willing to offer up their earthly possessions for this glorious cause. Grant us wisdom ever to employ the proper means, and a zeal that will not abate.

Let us rightly appreciate what great things Thou hast done for us and make us willing, yea, eager, to do unto others as Thou hast done unto us.

To that end bless our present deliberations unto the glory of Thy name and for the sake of the souls which Thou hast so dearly purchased with Thy blood. Amen.

17. Training Laborers for the Church.

Lord Jesus, Thou Lord and Head of Thy Church, Thou hast called us unto the task of preparing shepherds and soldiers of Jesus Christ for Thy Church. We are fully aware that we do not possess the required wisdom, love, patience, and perseverance for so important a task. Unless Thou dost supply our deficiency, we shall hinder, rather than aid, Thy cause. Therefore we pray Thee, do Thou first teach us that we, in turn, may teach others; let us experience Thy love that we,

in turn, may love others; have patience with us that we, in turn, may not weary of being patient with others. Finally deal mercifully with all our students, bless what we teach them and do for them, and help us to achieve that for which Thou hast called us into our office. Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

18. A Life Wholly Consecrated to God.

Lord, our God, we thank Thee that Thou hast brought us into the fellowship of Thy Church.

But Thou hast told us in advance that in the visible Church many are called while few are chosen; many appear at the marriage-feast of Thy Kingdom of Grace who despise the wedding-garment of true faith; many have a form of godliness who deny the power thereof, whom Thou wilt therefore some day refuse to recognize as Thine own. We pray Thee, grant that we all may earnestly strive to renounce all ungodliness, obey Thy Word in all matters, and serve Thee alone.

Alas! by nature our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked — stubborn one moment and despairing the next; stubborn when fortune smiles, despairing when misfortune breaks in upon us; and Thou alone canst establish, convert, purify, and sanctify our hearts.

To Thee we surrender them; mold and fashion them according to Thy will, until we shall be like unto Thee when we shall see Thee as Thou art.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thine only Son, our Lord and Mediator. Amen.

19. Adoption of New Constitution.

Lord Jesus, we are gathered to affix our signatures to an important document, a document in which we who desire to dwell together in Thy house publicly and solemnly promise to

stand by one another as Thy disciples, as children of Thy heavenly Father, and as brethren, seeking Thy glory, our own salvation, the edification of Thy Church, and the salvation of the poor, lost world about us.

O Lord Jesus, graciously look with pleasure upon the work we are undertaking. Give us the right heart, the right mind, the true boldness of faith, and genuine, fervent love and grant that this new document may prove a new bond binding us more closely to Thee and to one another.

Stablish us through Thy Holy Spirit, so that we may faithfully keep our vow and remain steadfast even when our faith is assailed and the sincerity of our love is proved, when the spirit is willing, but the flesh weak.

Finally bless the union which we are at this time forming anew, as Thou hast so abundantly blessed it hitherto. From day to day it becomes clearer to us that it is toward evening and the day is far spent. Oh, forsake us never, but abide with us and ever reveal unto us more and more the riches of Thy grace, the power of Thy Word, the strength of faith, the power of love, the firmness of hope, until, when we shall finally enter Thy Kingdom of Glory, we need no longer lean on human documents; for there, engulfed by the ocean of Thy love, we shall be free from sin, free from the opposition of the flesh, free from life's temptations, and one with Thee and the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

20. Preservation in Faith.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast founded Thy Church on earth and commanded that everywhere Thy believers unite, so that, being drawn together by the bonds of faith and love and made one heart and one mind by Thy Spirit, they may serve one another with the gifts received of Thee.

Thou hast gathered also us at this place into a congregation. Let our congregation be dear to Thee and graciously bless it. Revive those who are dead. Inspire those who have grown sluggish and indifferent. Make healthy and strong those who are sickly and weak. Draw us ever nearer to one another. Endow us ever more from day to day with Thy gifts and preserve us from being offended and from falling away. Increase our willingness and eagerness to serve one another. Continually add to our number such as likewise confess Thee and desire to serve Thee. Finally keep us in Thy saving grace unto our end and grant that hereafter we may all be gathered in Thy presence. Amen.

21. Abide with Us.

Lord Jesus, we humbly thank Thee that in these last troublous times Thou hast kept us, our dear congregation, steadfast in the true faith, in the confession of Thy pure Word and in true worship, that Thou hast granted us rest, peace, and harmony, and that Thou hast not permitted the tares of false doctrine or dissension and disharmony to spring up and corrupt the field which Thou hast blessed with the seed of Thy Word.

We pray Thee, do not regard our sins and our unworthiness, because of which Thou wouldst be justified to withhold Thy grace, Thy protection, and Thy blessings from us in the future, but abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day of the world's existence is far spent; yea, the wickedness of the world is growing apace. Hold in check every corruption in doctrine or life that seeks to contaminate us, heal every disease with which our souls are afflicted, make us ever firmer in faith, more zealous in love, and more loyal soldiers of Christ, and let our activity prove a blessing unto others in an ever greater degree.

Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

22. Admonishing the Erring.

Lord Jesus, by Thy holy apostle Thou hast commanded all Thy congregations: "Put away from among you that wicked person."

Thereby Thou hast shown that Thou dost indeed accept such sinners as seek of Thee deliverance from the guilt, punishment, and dominion of sin, but that all those who name Thy name must depart from iniquity and that such as delight in serving sin dare not own Thee as Lord nor claim to be Thy servants. But thereby Thou also declarest that Thy believers shall not consider him a brother and not declare him as such before the world who is a slave of sin, who even willingly serves sin and Satan.

O Lord Jesus, grant therefore, we beseech Thee, that none of us may be numbered with those who indeed say, "Lord, Lord," but refuse to do the will of Thy Father in heaven, who, while they confess Thy Gospel with their mouths, deny it with their actions, who desire to become partakers of Thy grace and then turn it into lasciviousness.

Furthermore, O Lord, should any one of our number commit sin and choose to go the way that Thou hatest, fill Thou our hearts with a love that will not weary of seeking the lost one and wield the weapon of Thy Word and of fervent intercession until he has been regained. But if he should refuse to know the time of his visitation, give us earnestness and zeal to seek Thine honor and to oppose sin and courage to separate ourselves from him and to warn him that he is going the way that leads to eternal death. Finally, however, grant that this means which Thou hast given Thy Church to bring the sinner to repentance may not fail whenever we are using it, but bless it in order that we all may come unto Thee as saved sinners and praise Thee forevermore. Amen.

23. Faithful Forever.

O Lord God, from eternity Thou didst determine that by creating the human race Thou wouldst gather unto Thyself a Church that would continue until the end of days here on earth and that, after a brief period of probation on earth, all the members of this Thy Church should see Thee face to face and triumph forever. Yea, even when Thy Church had fallen away from Thee, Thou didst not repent of Thine eternal decree of love, but according to a likewise eternal decree Thou didst send the promised Savior and Redeemer of mankind and didst call fallen mankind into a new Kingdom of Grace, and this Kingdom of Grace, Thy Church, Thou hast in spite of the gates of hell preserved unto this hour.

How can we sufficiently thank Thee for Thy favor in permitting us to be born within the pale of Thy Church, to be born again by the washing of regeneration, Holy Baptism, and thus to become members of Thy holy Church, to be called ever anew into it by Thy saving Gospel, and to be kept in it through faith unto this day?

Thereby Thou hast clearly shown that Thou wilt not that any one among us should be lost, but earnestly desirest that we all some day should enter Thy Church Triumphant and be and remain blessed forever.

Grant therefore, we beseech Thee, that we may not leave the fellowship of Thy Church, neither outwardly nor inwardly, neither by deed nor by a false attitude of our hearts, but that we may continue to believe, love, confess, fight, and suffer with it in order that we may also be glorified with it and obtain the crown of life.

Hear us, O God, for Jesus' sake, who is our only Salvation and our Righteousness and therefore our only Hope. Amen.

24. Divine Pardon and Power.

Lord Jesus, Thou desirest that Thy Church, which Thou hast delivered from this present evil world, shine as a light in this world, penetrate it like a good leaven, and as the salt of the earth preserve it from complete corruption.

Ruefully we must confess, however, that until now we have in a great measure failed to live up to this our high, holy, and blessed calling. The world has drawn us to itself more than we have drawn it and ourselves to Thee.

Alas! the ungodly influences which prevail in these last times have often ensnared us and hindered the progress of Thy blessed work in our hearts.

Lord Jesus, who desirest that all men be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth, who art not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and remain faithful to Thee until Thou givest unto them the heavenly crown, we pray Thee, reveal unto every one of us his shortcomings, point out to every one where his soul has been wounded, make every one hungry and thirsty for Thy grace and help in every need, cause every one incessantly to long and plead for Thy Spirit and faith, and grant every one strength to fight the good fight of faith until the victory has been won and to run the race until the prize has been obtained.

Lord, unless Thy hand doth hold us fast, we cannot remain steadfast; unless Thou defendest us against our spiritual enemies, we are defenseless; unless Thou givest us strength to fight, we cannot be victorious. O lift up our hands, which hang down, and make firm our feeble knees, revive and strengthen us unto a new life of love, of love that flows from a pure heart, a good conscience, and unfeigned faith, until we shall finally appear before Thy presence to behold and enjoy Thy glory forever and ever. Amen.

25. Spiritual Growth.

Lord Jesus, Thou dost constantly care for Thy dear Church; Thou openest unto it doors for expansion, suppliest it with nursing fathers and nursing mothers, pastors and teachers, comfortest it in persecutions, and grantest unto it victory; if in a weak moment Thy Church cries out: "The Lord hath forsaken me, my Lord hath forgotten me," Thou givest it the glorious assurance: "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands."

Such love Thou hast shown unto Thy Church also in these times. Though millions assailed it, Thou didst at all times hold Thy protecting hand over it, constantly didst supply it with new messengers of Thy pure Word and with stewards of Thy mysteries. Especially in this our new fatherland Thou hast provided for Thy Church a home such as it has not enjoyed for centuries.

For Thy goodness and truth we thank Thee from a joyful heart and praise Thee with a loud voice.

Grant, we beseech Thee, that Thy gracious purposes with regard to our souls may be fulfilled. Because we are enjoying such excellent fatherly care and have been led by Thee to the green pastures of Thy saving Word, grant that we may grow in knowledge, that our faith may become stronger, our inward man grow, our love become more perfect, and that we may become ever more zealous of good works, so that in the hour of grievous temptation we may be well equipped to fight the good fight of faith and gain the victory and in the end, when we are called hence, obtain the crown of life which Thou hast graciously promised us. Amen.

26. Peace and Harmony.

Lord Jesus, Thou Prince of Peace, who by Thy blood didst restore peace between us and Thy Father and Thy holy angels, Thou desirest to have also Thy disciples to live together in peace and intendest to establish such peace through Thy Spirit. We pray Thee, pour out upon us all Thy Spirit of love and peace.

Defend us from the old evil Foe, who is bent on sowing the seed of unrest and discord, breaking asunder the bonds of love and peace, and thus hindering the work of Thy grace wherever Thy Word is taught in all its purity and where true faith has been kindled in the hearts of Thy people.

Give us thoughts of peace, words of peace, and also such counsel as fosters peace, to Thy glory and our own temporal and eternal well-being, for the sake of Thy grace and truth. Amen.

Prayers when Pastors or Teachers are Called.

1. After the Death of a Faithful Pastor.

Lord, our God, dear heavenly Father, our congregation has in recent days felt Thy heavy hand. Thou hast called out of our midst unto Thyself a servant of Thy Word who for many years had served his flock faithfully and had been permitted to witness many fruits of his labors. Great is our loss. But we know that Thou dost remove the candlestick of Thy Word only from such a place where loathing of Thy Word has become evident, where it is despised and rejected. We do not reject Thy Word; we prize it as our most precious treasure on earth. We have therefore gathered here to-day to look about for men who would be worthy and capable to discharge the sacred duties of the ministry in this large, populous city as it should be done.

But who are we, O Lord, that we should know who is best fitted for our congregation unless Thou illumine our hearts? We are so easily misled and deceived.

Thou hast hitherto directed our congregation so graciously and supplied us so abundantly with Thy pure Word and Sacrament, and therefore we pray Thee, let Thy counsel guide us at this time to present unto Thee only men after Thine own heart.

May all selfish considerations and aims be far from us! In our discussions and in the casting of our ballots may we seek only Thine honor and the coming and extension of Thy Kingdom of Grace. Graciously grant that this end may be attained, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Chief Shepherd. Amen.

2. A Faithful Shepherd.

Lord Jesus, Thou Chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, we have gathered here to choose an undershepherd for our flock.

The importance of the matter before us, for us and for our children, for time and for eternity, is known to Thee better than to us. What a calamity for us and for our children if, instead of a faithful shepherd, we should elect a ravening wolf in sheep's clothing or even an unfaithful hireling, who seeks his own and does not care for the sheep.

Therefore we pray Thee, be present with us in our meeting and direct our choice.

Help us to seek, find, and elect a man such as we need, one who holds fast the faithful Word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.

Yea, give us a man who is equally zealously affected for the purity of Thy Word and for an upright, new, holy life; a man who believes in his heart what he preaches with his mouth; a man who speaks from personal experience when he admonishes, warns, rebukes, and consoles; a man who himself is walking the way to heaven which he would point out to others; a man who without blushing can exhort his hearers as did Thy faithful servant Paul: "Be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample."

Give us a man, we humbly beseech Thee, who will not tear down the grand and glorious work which Thou hast begun in our midst, but will continue it and always abound in the work of the ministry, that Thy name may be honored and uncounted souls may be benefited for time and eternity. Grant that the arrival of our new undershepherd may mark the beginning of a new era of grace in our midst. Help this congrega-

tion to live up to its name, being named after Thee, and make of it a genuine Immanuel, a "God-with-us," congregation.

Lord, because of our unfaithfulness we have deserved to be cast off by Thee, to be denied the privilege of having our souls satisfied with Thy Word. But, we pray Thee, deal with us according to Thine unspeakable grace. For Thy unmerited goodness we will thank and praise Thee forevermore. Amen.

3. A Man after God's Heart.

Lord Jesus, we have gathered here to-day for an important task, the nomination of candidates from whom an under-shepherd for our souls is to be chosen. We well realize that we are not equal to so important a task. Our flesh and blood is depraved and prone to seek such teachers as satisfy our itching ears, such as shout, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, such as comfort us, but do not correct us, such as make the gate to Thy kingdom wide and the way to life broad.

Therefore be Thou present with us to-day and enlighten, sanctify, and guide us that our deliberations may redound to Thy glory, to our welfare, and to the growth of Thy kingdom.

Thou Thyself hast commanded us: "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." O hear our prayer and do not punish us in Thine anger by sending us a false prophet or a hireling, but let us seek and find men, not after our, but after Thy heart. And when we have found such men, help us to elect that man whom from eternity Thou hast destined to serve us.

Hear us for the sake of Thy grace and truth. Amen.

4. After an Unsuccessful Call.

Lord, our God, again we are gathered to deliberate upon the choice of a shepherd such as we need. We supposed we had found him whom Thou hadst chosen for us, but again we

experienced how true it is what Thou sayest in Thy Word: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways." Therefore we pray Thee again, who alone dost provide Thy congregations with shepherds and teachers, help us to find what we seek and need. Thou knowest that our congregation has been seriously wounded; send us therefore a physician of souls whom Thou hast endowed with heavenly wisdom, so that he will be capable of healing our wounds. Thou knowest that many among us have strayed from the right path; give us therefore a shepherd who is filled with a shepherd's love and faithfully attends to the wants of his flock, who seeks the lost and does not rest until he has found them. Thou knowest that many speak evil of us; give us a man therefore who is able to try the spirits and discern the true from the false; a man who will raise his voice as a trumpet and without respect of persons will point out to every one his sins and iniquities; a man whose own pious conduct will be a model for us to follow. And when he has come, grant that we may obey him and with one heart and one soul walk the narrow way, which leadeth unto life.

Hear us for the sake of our eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, Thine only-begotten Son. Amen.

5. Divine Choice.

Lord Jesus, when, long ago, Thy disciples, at Thy command and in Thy name, proceeded to elect a fellow-apostle and had nominated two men full of faith and the Holy Spirit, they lifted up their hearts to Thee in ardent prayer and said: "Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show us whether of these two Thou hast chosen."

And, lo, their prayer was answered: by controlling the

casting of lots, Thou didst indicate to them that not Joseph, but Matthias, was Thy choice.

Therefore we, too, call upon Thee from the depth of our hearts: "Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show us, by directing our hearts, whom Thou hast chosen to be the shepherd of our souls."

Thou wilt that we all go the way that leads to eternal life and not the way that leads to perdition. O therefore give us a true Matthias, a man who through pure doctrine, through reproof and consolation, through admonition and warning, publicly and otherwise, in our church and in our homes, in good and evil days, will point out to us the narrow way and by his own example show us how to walk therein.

We promise to accept him as Thy messenger, cheerfully to follow him in faith, word, and deed, and to turn neither to the right hand nor to the left.

Help us thereunto, O Lord Jesus, through the power of Thy grace. Amen.

6. A Faithful Shepherd.

Lord Jesus, Thou Chief Shepherd of Thy sheep, who according to Thy divine power, wisdom, and grace dost appoint and transfer undershepherds in Thy Church, it hath pleased Thee to transfer our shepherd to another part of Thy great pasture. We pray Thee, forsake not this congregation nor hide Thy gracious countenance from it; preserve unto it Thy pure Word and the unadulterated Sacraments and soon give it a shepherd after Thine own heart, who will herd the sheep aright, fearlessly guard it against wolves, and with holy and blameless conduct serve as a model to the flock. Graciously grant that we may accept and obey the word of His mouth as

Thy Word, follow his good example, finally together with him obtain the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls, and then as members of Thy Church Triumphant forever praise and extol Thy love for sinners. Amen.

7. Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Lord Jesus, we are an orphaned congregation. At Thy call our shepherd left us to assume the care of another flock.

Therefore we turn to Thee. Thou art the one Good Shepherd. For each one of Thy flocks Thou hast given Thy life; Thou hast purchased them all with Thy blood. Nor wilt Thou forsake any of Thy flocks. Not only dost Thou not flee when the wolf comes, but Thou remainest with a flock also when some other flock calls Thee and Thou hastens to help it.

O Thou almighty, all-present, and all-gracious Chief Shepherd, take us into Thy gracious protection and lovingly care for us. Preserve our souls from harm while we are without a shepherd and soon give us another servant of Thy Word who will break the Bread of Life unto us in purity and abundance and faithfully watch over our souls.

Unto us, however, grant grace that we may prove ourselves as truly Thy sheep through unfeigned faith, through obedience unto Thee and Thy Word, and through sincere and fervent love toward one another.

Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

8. A Pastor Must Serve All Classes.

Lord Jesus, a sacred and most important matter has summoned us here at this time. Unto Thy church Thou hast given the great privilege of selecting and electing in Thy name and in Thy stead those who are to be Thy servants in Thy

Kingdom of Grace. We have assembled here this evening to exercise this privilege. The welfare, the salvation, of many souls is dependent upon the proper use of this privilege.

Since, however, we well know that we are unfit for such a task, we turn to Thee, Thou Chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and pray Thee from the depth of our hearts, enlighten our understanding, sanctify our will, and direct our hearts.

Have compassion upon this little flock and give it a faithful shepherd. Have compassion upon the aged and give them an experienced brother and comrade in their sorrow. Have compassion upon the young and give them a spiritual father who will provide well for their souls. Have compassion upon the wayward and give them a real friend of the lost. Have compassion upon the poor, the sad, the spiritually afflicted, the weary, the sick, the dying, and give them a true physician of the soul, who will dispense sweet comfort to all. Have compassion upon those weak in understanding and give them a teacher able to impart unto others the saving doctrine. Have compassion upon Christians and unchristians, upon Thine own and upon the children of the world, and give them a model whose light will shine continually. Have compassion upon Thy whole Church, and give it also at this place a true steward of Thy mysteries, a faithful watchman, who will sound a warning whenever it is necessary, and a courageous champion of Thine unadulterated, saving truth.

If Thou wilt give us such a man after Thine own heart, we will obey Thy Word as proclaimed by him, cheerfully follow his example, and with word and deed thank and praise Thee here in time and hereafter in eternity. Amen.

9. A Long Vacancy.

Lord Jesus, for a long time Thou hast permitted our congregation to remain shepherdless. Until now none of those servants in Thy vineyard whom we have called has been convinced that he should accept our call.

But should we murmur on that account? It is not because of Thy wrath that Thou didst not permit those whom we have called to come to us, but because of Thy love and shepherdlike faithfulness. They were not designed by Thee for us; and only he whom Thou hast chosen to be our shepherd can work successfully in our midst, unto our salvation, the glory of Thy name, and the spreading of Thy kingdom. Thou hast not permitted us up to this time to succeed in finding the servant of Thy Word whom we are to have because Thou desirest us to realize more than ever that true shepherds are gifts from Thee, but also to try us, whether we will persevere in prayer and whether our prayer be really fervent or merely cold lip-worship.

Thou hast said by the mouth of the prophet: "I will give to Jerusalem one that bringeth good tidings" and hast assured us through Thy servant Paul that Thou dost ordain shepherds and teachers in all Thy churches; give unto us therefore, we beseech Thee, a servant of Thy Word who will meet our requirements, who is able to declare Thy counsel unto our salvation, zealous in defending us against wolves, faithful in admonishing us, fearless in reproofing all ungodliness, experienced in Thy ways and able to comfort those tempted by sin and the world, prudent in ruling his flock, tireless in watching over every soul entrusted to him, who will faithfully bring before Thee in intercessory prayer the needs of every soul.

Lord Jesus, Thou art more eager to give us such a man

after Thine own heart than we are to desire such a one. Should we therefore be desirous of obtaining a teacher after our own notions, who will preach simply to satisfy itching ears, then bring to naught our counsel.

O send us a man, not after the desires of our flesh, but after the desires of the spirit of all Thy believers in our midst, yea, as Thou wilt. Then we shall thank and praise Thee here in time and hereafter in all eternity. Amen.

10. After Repeated Unsuccessful Calls.

Lord Jesus, repeatedly we have pleaded with Thee for a faithful servant of Thy Word, and at one time we hoped that we had found one; but later it developed that we had hoped in vain. However, we know that Thine object in often letting Thy children wait for those things for which they pray is to prove them whether they actually desire earnestly those things for which they ask and to cause them to pray more fervently. Therefore we appear once more before Thy presence to-day and repeat our prayer: Let us find the man whom we need and whom Thou hast chosen for us from eternity.

Thou knowest how important it is for us and our children that we obtain a man who is not only able to administer the office of Thy Word, but is also filled with a consuming zeal and the determination to place himself whole-heartedly into Thy service. Thou knowest that a false prophet would mean death and damnation to us, while a true shepherd would mean life and salvation.

Remember that we are Thy people, whom Thou hast purchased with a price. Do not regard our unworthiness, but graciously consider our needs. Let not the imperfections of our prayer keep Thee from answering it, but remember that

Thou hast commanded us to pray and promised to hear our prayer.

Be present with us this evening and bless us for Thy name's sake. Amen.

11. Spiritual Needs Supplied.

Lord Jesus, again we have assembled to deliberate upon the affairs which we as a Christian congregation have to deal with. We pray Thee above all, enable us to discern what is right and wholesome, zealously to perform it, and with Thy help to bring everything to a proper termination.

Help us, while we are deliberating upon temporal affairs, not to forget the eternal things lest our souls fail to be profited; but grant that we may strengthen one another in faith, in love, in patience, in gentleness, in humility, and in hope; for we are in dire need of all this in these dangerous times, in which, alas! so many are wholly engrossed in the vanities of this world, in the things that pass away.

Direct and bless our election. Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen. *calling you men shepherds*

12. The Ministry of the Word a Holy Office.

Lord Jesus, after by Thy suffering and death Thou hadst redeemed a lost world and by Thy triumphant resurrection from the dead hadst brought to light everlasting righteousness for all sinners, Thou didst withdraw Thy visible presence from this world, didst ascend up to heaven, and wast seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But before Thy departure Thou didst institute the holy office of the ministry that all Thy redeemed might be called unto Thee and Thy believers might be led to green pastures.

The office of the ministry is a most holy institution. A servant of the Word is to teach, to reprove, to admonish, to comfort, to watch. Grant, O Lord, that this office may be properly administered also among us, that it may be the means of awakening, strengthening, and preserving many souls and of bringing them to the portals of heaven.

Inasmuch as we have assembled here this evening to deliberate upon the choice of a servant of the Word in our midst, we pray Thee, enlighten us that we may know Thy will and so direct us that we may do Thy will. It is Thou who givest teachers to Thy Church; to Thee, therefore, we commit our cause. Continue to be with us as Thou hast been with us hitherto; continue to help us as Thou hast helped us in the past.

Hear us for the sake of Thy goodness and grace. Amen.

13. Calling a Teacher.

Lord Jesus, Thou didst admonish Thy disciples: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." That admonition holds good for all times, yea, surely especially for these last, sad times.

Also in our day the harvest is plenteous. By the millions heathen are groping about in error, by the millions those baptized in Thy name have fallen away.

Thy Church is lying in ruins.

Especially in our land a great spiritual famine prevails.

Therefore we have called upon Thee again and again, privately and publicly, to send laborers into Thy harvest.

And now we ask Thee graciously to approve the choice that we have just made.

Lord, who hast in Thy kingdom not only vessels of gold and silver, but also frail earthen vessels, make of us, and particularly of him whom we have elected to teach our youth, vessels of Thy mercy and mighty instruments of Thy grace. Amen.

14. Guidance.

Lord God, heavenly Father, Thy dear Son Jesus Christ not only said, "The harvest is plenteous," but before sending out His disciples to preach the Gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, He also spent a night in prayer. Thus He taught us by word and example to come before Thee in prayer and supplication when we need laborers in Thy vineyard.

Accordingly we come before Thee in this evening hour, being assembled to elect a shepherd and watchman over our souls and a leader in our battle with flesh, world, and Satan, and ask Thee to supply our need.

We are not our own, but belong unto Thee. Therefore, should we be lost, we should be lost unto Thee, and the bitter labor and pain which we have occasioned Thee with our sins would have been in vain.

Thou knowest that we ourselves are ignorant of what is good for us. We cannot peer into the future. We cannot tell what is in the hearts of men. Hence we are easily deceived and apt to bring harm upon ourselves.

Do Thou guide us therefore in our choice. To that end take our hearts into Thy hands, direct our tongues and hands, and give unto us and unto all in this vicinity thoughts of peace unto the end of days. Amen.

General Prayers.

1. Pardon and Piety.

Lord God, heavenly Father, again we have gathered here to deliberate upon the affairs of our congregation. In order that our meeting may be well pleasing to Thee and profitable to ourselves, we begin by confessing to Thee in all sincerity that we are by nature sinful and come short of Thy glory, that we are incapable of doing good and wholly inclined to evil; moreover, that in thoughts, desires, deportment, words, and deeds we daily, yea, hourly, sin much and have deserved only punishment. At the same time we seize upon the precious promises which Thy Word holds out to all sinners who take refuge to Thy grace in Christ Jesus and confidently pray: Forgive the sins of every one among us, lay them not to our charge, cover them with the merits of our Savior Jesus Christ, blot them out, never to reappear, cast them behind Thee into the depth of the sea, and remember them no more in all eternity.

Having forgiven our sins and adopted us as Thy dear children, help us to thank Thee with our hearts, lips, and hands for Thine unspeakable grace. Keep us from sinning anew; above all, enable us earnestly to guard against every intentional and deliberate sin. Help us to walk piously as Thy children and finally to obtain mercy before Thy throne; for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

2. Guidance of the Spirit.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we are gathered here to deliberate, not upon the affairs of this life, but upon the affairs of the soul, the affairs of Thy kingdom, the affairs of eternal

life. But we are wholly incapable of disposing of such matters properly; in spiritual, divine, and heavenly matters our understanding is darkened and our will perverted.

We therefore pray Thee, enlighten our understanding, sanctify our will, cleanse our hearts, and direct our mouths that all things uttered here be in accordance with Thy Word, well-pleasing to Thee, and good to the use of edifying.

Grant that this meeting may prove a blessing not only unto us who are assembled here, but unto our entire congregation as well, unto old and young, parents and children, teachers and pastors.

While we sojourn here below, endow us more and more with the gifts of Thy Spirit. Finally, on the Day of Judgment, let us all find mercy in Thy presence; through Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, our Mediator, and our Advocate. Amen.

3. Restoration of the Wayward.

Lord, our God, Thy Son, our Savior, has promised us: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." Therefore we pray Thee, have compassion upon us and upon all members of our congregation. Grant wisdom, faithfulness, careful oversight, and Christian zeal to those who are to rule and unto all members of our congregation a heart that is willing to obey Thy saving Word.

If there should be some who are still slumbering in carnal security, awaken them and fill them with horror over their sins. If some have fallen back under the dominion of sin, free them from the fetters of Satan. If, lured by love for the world, some have forsaken Thee, the only Fountain of living waters, heal

them of their fatal blindness. If some have grown weary and careless in the good fight of faith, inspire them to fight with renewed determination. If some have grown weak and discouraged, make them strong in Thee and in the power of Thy might.

Yea, Lord, our God, save also this Thy people and bless Thine heritage; feed them and lift them up forever. Amen.

4. Self-Examination.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast said: "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Thus it is evident that in the days of Thy return to earth, in the last days of the world, *the number of true believers will be exceedingly small*, yea, so small as hardly to be detected by Thine eye. We know, Lord Jesus, that the end is near, for all signs pointing to it have put in their appearance. Hence we ask ourselves, Are we included in the small number of those who still hold fast the faith, or are we merely posing as believers? Is our faith mere show, or are we sincere believers? Have we by faith become new creatures, different altogether from what we formerly were, who no longer live unto themselves and no longer serve the world and its idols, but live wholly unto Thee, who didst die for us and rise again?

O Lord Jesus, who hast redeemed us with Thy blood, hast called us by means of Baptism and the Word, and enlightened us with Thy gifts, we pray Thee, also sanctify us and help us faithfully to fight against, and overcome, every enemy of our soul, so that on the Last Day we may receive of Thee the crown which Thou keepest in store for all Thy faithful soldiers.

Hear us for the sake of Thy blessed name, in which we have forgiveness and salvation. Amen.

5. The Armor of God.

God, Thou sayest in Thy Word: "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows; for so He giveth His beloved sleep." But if without Thee all government and work and worry in the kingdoms of the world is in vain, how much more in the kingdom of Thy Church!

Since Thou hast called us to administer the affairs of Thy church at this place, we pray Thee, make us strong in the power of Thy might. Without Thee we can neither know the truth nor uphold it; without Thee we cannot oppose and overcome the power of sin and Satan; without Thee we cannot preserve, build, and expand Thy kingdom nor defend it against its foes. O indue us with Thine armor. Provide us with the breastplate of righteousness, with the shield of faith, and with the Sword of the Spirit. Help us to labor and fight that Thy Word may not be bound, but have free course and be preached with all boldness, as it is fit, that our congregation may let its light shine before men, so that they may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in heaven. Hear us for the sake of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

6. Open-Mindedness.

Lord Jesus, we have gathered here to-day to discuss a matter concerning ^{the} ~~which~~ we have no explicit command from Thee, but in which we must be guided by wisdom gained from Christian experience, prompted by the desire to promote Thy kingdom.

We pray Thee, endow us with wisdom from on high, with wisdom that cometh from Thee, the eternal Source of

wisdom. Fill us with the holy desire that above all Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done.

Keep us from sinfully insisting upon our own opinions, as though they alone were correct and those of others wrong or foolish. Grant grace to every one who speaks to express himself charitably toward his brethren, being mindful that Thou art in our midst.

When we close our meeting, grant that it may be truthfully said that the manner in which we carried it on was such as becometh Christians, was beneficial to our neighbor, and well-pleasing to Thee.

Hear us for Thy name's sake. Amen.

7. Sincere Acceptance of God's Grace.

Lord, our God, in Thy holy Word Thou sayest: "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live."

Thus Thou hast affirmed with a solemn oath that Thou desirest the death of no man, but wilt that all men be saved. Thou hast plainly shown this Thy desire by giving Thy Son into death for all men and reconciling all men unto Thyself. By Thy Gospel Thou dost now invite all to the marriage-supper of grace and salvation and commandest Thy servants, "Compel them to come in." With Thy Word Thou dost graciously knock at the door of every heart and art ready to pour out Thy Holy Spirit upon all flesh.

Thou hast filled all among us who with our whole heart accept Thy Word as the saving truth with sweet comfort. Thou art a perfect Refuge unto those who are bowed down by the load of sin.

But, O Lord, in addition to having no pleasure in the

wicked Thou hast expressed Thy desire that all of them might turn from their ways.

O forbid that any of us should trifle with Thy grace, that any of us should wish to continue in sin. Grant that every one may come before Thee with a penitent and contrite heart, that no one wilfully resist the gracious operation of Thy Holy Spirit, but that every one be converted by Him and then fight the good fight of faith against flesh, world, and Satan, never tiring, and not look back at the Sodom of this world, but continue faithful unto the end.

O give us strength and keep us steadfast in Thy Word and faith until we come to that place where we shall be safe against falling away and free from all ills, where there will be fulness of joy and pleasures at Thy right hand forevermore. Amen.

8. Warning against Self-Deception.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast said: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"; but Thou hast added these words: "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." By the mouth of Thy holy apostle Thou hast said: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"; but Thou hast also told us: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His"; and again: "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

O guard us against self-deception, against imagining that we have come unto Thee whereas we still hesitate to take Thy yoke upon us. Let us not imagine that we are sure of escaping condemnation while we have not yet become altogether new creatures and Thy Spirit does not dwell in us.

How terrible if, after posing as Thine own here and

regarded and respected as such by others, some day we should have to hear out of Thy mouth the terrible words: "I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

How terrible if, after we have lived an outwardly godly life, we be included among those of whom, after Thou hadst given the admonition, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate," Thou didst say: "For many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able."

Therefore we pray: Cast out everything that would separate Thee and us, everything that would prevent our hearts and minds from being afire with love for Thee. Amen.

9. Saving Faith.

Lord, our God, in Thy holy Word Thou hast commanded us to pray and hast promised to hear us; Thou hast even urged us: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."

Thou desirest not only that we ask Thee cheerfully and confidently as dear children ask their dear father, but also that we come before Thee with all boldness, asking not only for few and small, but also for many and great favors.

We pray Thee, above all forgive the sins of every one among us. Cast them into the depth of the sea, let them vanish as vapor, and remember them no more, neither now nor in the hour of our departure, yea, not in all eternity.

To the end that we may lay hold of such forgiveness and make it our own, grant us true faith through Thy Holy Spirit, preserve it within us, and increase it from day to day.

Purify and renew our hearts by faith, make us hate sin and despise all the vanity of this world. Create within us genuine and fervent love to Thee and Thy Word, to our brethren and all fellow-redeemed, be they friends or foes.

Finally do not let us be tempted above that we are able, give us patience and perseverance in every cross Thou layest upon us, finally preserve us unto Thy heavenly kingdom.

Lord, reject not our prayer; let our petitions come before Thee and grant them according to Thine everlasting love and truth for the sake of Jesus Christ, our eternal Mediator. Amen.

10. Being Ever Mindful of God.

Lord God, heavenly Father, not only have Thy thoughts from eternity been of us, not only are our days recorded in Thy book, and not only didst Thou before the foundation of the world decree to save us through Thine only-begotten Son, but also now Thou art mindful of us day and night, every hour, yea, every moment. But how about us? Alas! we frequently are so forgetful of Thee. Our flesh and blood entice us to sin, and, lo! we forget about Thee and yield to their temptations. The world with its treasures, pleasures, and fame beckons, and, lo! we forget about Thee and follow it. Satan arouses sinful thoughts and desires within us, and, lo! we forget about Thee and permit ourselves to be misled.

O Lord, our God, forgive unto us such gross ingratitude, folly, iniquity, and sin, and grant us Thy Holy Spirit ever to keep us mindful of Thee, of Thy Word, of Thy commandments, of Thy warnings, and of Thy promises. Yea, let us think of Thee at all times, when we arise and when we retire, in our work and in our travels, in our business and trade, when we are alone and when we are in company, in good and evil days, in life and in death. But in the hour of death let us above all be mindful of Thy grace, and let us depart in faith and enter eternal bliss for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

11. Evil Times.

Eternal and living God, Thou didst let us be born in evil times, times in which lying and deceiving rather than truth and faithfulness, selfishness and greed in place of love, prevail everywhere. Like an overwhelming flood such depravity has swept over this generation in these last times. No one any longer is disposed to serve his neighbor in love and to help him improve and protect his property and business. Instead, every one asks: "What shall I have therefor?" In vain Thy Word is proclaimed. The world rebelliously shouts: "We will not have this man to reign over us!" "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." Thy Word is to them a foolish fable.

And, alas! in consequence of this the times have also come for Thy Christians of which Thy dear Son has told us that in His Church, too, the love of many would grow cold.

Graciously preserve us from being carried away by the madly rushing stream of corruption in these evil times, and from perverting, as did Israel, Thy holy Law and rendering it ineffective. Help us rather to grasp its deeper spiritual meaning, humbly to submit to it, to see our guilt reflected in it as in a mirror, but then to seek and find Thy pardoning grace and, as becometh Thy children, to walk according to the rule of Thy Law.

To that end bless also our gathering at this time for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Redeemer. Amen.

12. Preservation from Spiritual Decay.

Lord Jesus, properly to feed and lead Thy flock is a task that under all conditions exceeds the wisdom and power of man; but in our day the task is exceptionally difficult. The words which Thou one day didst address to one of Thy disciples:

"Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat," without a doubt apply also to all Thy disciples on earth to-day, also to this congregation. Temptations to fall away are growing ever greater and fiercer, the assaults of the devil are becoming ever more subtle, and the way leading to eternal life is being beset with ever more dangers.

We humbly pray Thee therefore not to forsake us in these dangerous times, not to deal with us after our sins nor to reward us according to our iniquities. Give the thunder of Thy Law power to terrify the secure and the balm of Thy Gospel power to soothe and strengthen the faint hearts. Cause Thy Church to grow also among us until Thou wilt come to deliver Thine own. O come quickly, Lord Jesus, and forever put an end to all misery and woe. Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

13. Blessings of Public Worship.

Lord, our God, in this Western world Thou hast gathered our little flock about Thy pure and holy Word and unadulterated Sacraments. Unspeakably great are the benefits which Thou didst thus bestow upon us. As often as we meet in Thy house, the way to salvation is pointed out to us, and we are recalled from the way to perdition; there our sins and spiritual maladies are pointed out to us as well as the remedy that can heal us; there heaven is opened unto us; there those deeds which please Thee and with which we ought to show our gratitude to Thee for Thy grace are pointed out to us; there we obtain comfort in the anguish of sin and in all the cares and sorrows of life; there we are aroused when we have begun to slumber; there we are filled with certainty when assailed by doubt; there we are prepared for a cheerful and blessed departure from this life.

O let us never forget what great things Thou hast done for us in gathering us into a flock of Thine. Help us now also to show by the life we lead that we no longer belong to the world, but are Thine elect children, who belong to Thee and are filled with Thy Spirit.

Finally take us to Thy congregation above, which will praise Thee with a pure heart forever and ever. Amen.

14. Pardon and Restoration.

Lord, our God, we confess before the world that we are justified and saved, not by deeds of our own, but through faith. This doctrine is offensive to the world, inasmuch as it regards faith as a soft pillow for a life of sin. Therefore we should with our lives prove to the blind world that it is mistaken. By observing us, they should see that true faith is not something dead and powerless, for it transforms, cleanses, and sanctifies the human heart; that faith does not lull the conscience of man to sleep or dull it, but rather awakens and sharpens it; that faith expels from the heart all love of sin and selfishness and fills it with love to Thee and our neighbor; that faith ever produces a life that is just, pious, holy, and rich in good works.

But, alas, Lord, what a sad spectacle we are — filthy and polluted in Thy sight and in the sight of the world! Our light is extinguished.

It grieves us greatly that through our fault Thy holy name is blasphemed, Thy Gospel reviled, Thy Church disgraced.

O Lord, raise us again from our fall. Grant us true repentance for our sins. Help us by Thy grace to rebuild what we have torn down.

And if Thou seest fit to chasten us by not removing the disgrace, we will cheerfully bear it if only Thou wilt remove the sin and offense from us. Above all, do not, we beseech

Thee, become our enemy; do not disown us; withdraw not Thy grace from us. By Thy grace we will henceforth be more watchful, be zealously affected for that which is pleasing to Thee, and with a new life serve Thee and honor and praise Thy name.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

15. Disciples Indeed.

Lord Jesus, when Thy tempters approached Thee with flattering phrases, Thou didst reprove them with the words: "Ye hypocrites, why tempt ye Me?" Thus Thou didst show that Thou lovest truthfulness and uprightness and hatest all hypocrisy, trickery, deception, and pretense. Hence Thou wouldst have also us confess Thee not only with our words, but also with our deeds; we must not merely be hearers of Thy Word, but also doers; we are to be humble not only with our lips, but also with our hearts; to be chaste not only in body, but also in soul; not only outwardly to separate ourselves from the world and call ourselves Christians, but also inwardly, and by our entire life and manners to prove ourselves to be Christians.

How much vain pretense Thy penetrating eye possibly beholds also among us! How many a one within our congregation who would be known as Thine own may be found wanting when weighed by Thee!

O Lord, preserve us all from self-deception and with the aid of Thy gracious Spirit enable us to be what we seem and unto our end to walk in truth, so that we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Thee at Thy coming.

Hear us, Lord Jesus, for the sake of Thy grace and truth. Amen.

16. Restoring a Fallen Brother.

Holy and just, yet gracious and merciful God, with heavy hearts we have again gathered here to-day to hear the confession of a brother who hearkened to the counsel of the world and to the voice of human reason and as a result committed a serious sin, calling down upon himself and others grave misfortune.

We pray Thee, give grace unto this our brother sincerely to repent of his sins and humbly to confess them before his grieved brethren and the gravely offended world.

However, if a brother stumbles and falls, we know that Thou desirest the entire congregation to mourn and not only to learn from such an example how easily every Christian may go astray, but also to humble itself, regarding the sin of such a brother as a joint offense. O grant that the present case may fill us all with a wholesome horror, that henceforth we may all be more diligent in watching and praying, that we all may take our Christianity more seriously than before, that we all may keep aloof, better than ever, from all danger threatening our souls and every temptation to sin; that, better than heretofore, we may make Thy Word the sole rule and standard of our life, all our actions; and finally, that we all may grow more humble from day to day and become ever smaller in our own eyes.

Above all, help us to take refuge in Thy grace, with the aid of Thy Holy Spirit share in it through faith, rejoice in its consolation, and be strengthened by it loyally to carry on the strenuous, but necessary warfare with flesh, world, and the devil, and finally, trusting in Thy grace through Christ, enjoy a blessed end. Amen.

17. Judgment Day.

Lord Jesus, some day we must all appear before Thy judgment-seat that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

What a day that will be when Thou wilt return in all Thy glory and we shall have to appear before Thee, the Judge of the living and the dead!

With Thy redeeming blood remove from Thy record all our sins, so that on that day each one of us may hear Thee say of us: "I find no fault in him."

After Thou hast provided us with the clean garment of Thy righteousness, keep us from soiling it with deliberate sinning.

Grant us grace to fight faithfully against all temptations to sin and iniquity in order that our whole spirit and soul and body be preserved wholly blameless unto the day of Thy return.

Hear us for the sake of Thy grace. Amen.

18. Grasping God's Grace.

Lord God, heavenly Father, in Thy holy Word Thou hast revealed to us, not only that Thy mercy is great above the heavens, but also that Thy mercies are new every morning. No one is excluded from Thy grace; the door of Thy mercy is open to all at all times. While it is called To-day, so long our day of grace has not come to an end. As the sun rises anew for all men every morning as of old, even so as of old the sun of Thy grace rises anew to each one every morning. For this we magnify and praise Thee, Thou good and gracious and merciful God.

But now we beseech Thee, give unto us Thy Holy Spirit that He may graciously keep us from trifling with Thy grace and from hardening our hearts when we hear Thy gracious voice, but that we open wide unto Thee the portals of our hearts as often as we hear Thy Word, so that Thou mayest rule therein according to Thy holy and blessed will.

Having begun the good work within us, O Lord, do Thou perform it unto the end; by Thy power keep us steadfast in the faith unto salvation and make of us poor sinners monuments of Thy grace unto all eternity.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Savior. Amen.

19. Restoring the Backsliding.

God, by Thy Holy Spirit Thou didst move Thy servant Asaph to proclaim unto the wicked: "What hast thou to do to declare My statutes or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest My words behind thee?" Thus Thou didst voice Thy disapproval of those who, though they confess Thy Word before the world, in reality hate its instruction and reproofs; who boast of the covenant into which they have entered with Thee, namely, Holy Baptism, but, casting Thy Word behind their backs, break Thy covenant.

O grant that we into whose hearts has been sown the seed of Thy Word may also bring forth heavenly fruit and that we may confess Thy Word not only with our mouths, but also with our lives.

So many congregations have been favored with Thy pure Word, but, alas! after a time their hearts no longer were right towards Thee, and they ceased to serve Thee whole-heartedly, and then Thou didst withdraw also Thy heart from them and

removedst the candlestick out of its place. Graciously preserve us from such a fate. Call to repentance all backsliders in our congregation, rouse all those who have begun to slumber, inspire anew the indifferent, restore to faithfulness the unfaithful, and open the eyes of those who are blind to their own sad condition. Deal patiently with us; regard not our unworthiness, but the worthiness of Thy Son, our Savior, our Substitute, and our Advocate. Pour out Thy blessing upon us anew to our own and our children's spiritual welfare and to the praise and glory of Thy grace in all eternity. Amen.

20. A Time of Epidemic.

God, who "turnest man to destruction and sayest, Return, ye children of men," what a solemn call to repentance Thou hast sent us in the form of a deadly epidemic!

But, alas! not only the blind and dead world ignores that solemn call and continues unterrified in sin; even we, Thy Christians, must confess unto Thee that our hearts, too, have become hardened.

Have mercy upon us, we beseech Thee, and accompany Thy ghastly messenger with the power of Thy grace to awaken us and to draw us to Thee.

Let not the glimmer of our faith be extinguished, but fan it into an ever brighter flame. Grant us strength firmly to rely upon the merits of Thine only-begotten Son and upon the Word of Thy grace that we may with confident trust exult: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" "Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Keep Thy shielding hand over us and all those dear to us. Should it please Thee to take us out of this world at this time,

help us through death into life, through conflict to victory, through danger to safety, through misery to glory.

Do this for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thine only-begotten Son, our Redeemer and Advocate. Amen.

21. Spiritual Warfare.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast declared that Thy purpose in coming into the world was not to send peace, but the sword. Even to-day we experience the truth of these Thy words. Wherever Thy Word sounds forth, drawing Thy Christians unto it, conflict and strife arise, conflict between flesh and Spirit, opposition from without, and strife within.

O keep us from being offended at such a state of affairs and from growing weary. In this world, where besides Thee, Lord Jesus, Satan rules, where flesh and spirit dwell together, where truth and error, right and wrong, Thy Word and man's words and thoughts, each strive for supremacy—in such a world it is impossible that peace should prevail.

Grant that we may ever be found fighting on the right side, and not only fighting, but fighting honorably, valiantly, cheerfully, constantly, and triumphantly, until we shall obtain the crown. Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

22. God's Abiding Faithfulness.

Lord, our God, unto all members of Thy Church Thou hast said: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn Thee."

Throughout our lives we all have enjoyed the fulfilment of these words.

When we were yet helpless infants, covered with sin and guilt, Thou didst draw us unto Thee through Holy Baptism and didst say unto each one of us, "Thou shalt live."

During the care-free days of childhood Thou didst draw us unto Thee, some through pious parents, others through faithful teachers.

When we indulged in the vanities of youth, Thou didst draw us unto Thee by repeatedly knocking at the door of our heart and our conscience with Thy Word and Spirit.

When we forsook Thee, Thou didst draw us to Thee again. Thou didst not desert us and sweep us, like many others, into eternity when we were unprepared to meet Thee; no, Thou didst extend the day of grace for us; Thou soughtest us as a shepherd seeks his lost lamb, not abandoning the search until Thou hadst found us and restored us to faith in Thy Son.

Thou didst preserve us from grave temptations, to which we surely would have fallen a prey; and as often as we fell into a sin, Thou didst graciously raise us again from our fall.

Thou didst draw us unto Thee by leading us into fellowship with Thy true visible Church, in which Thou feedest us upon the green pastures of Thy Word and the holy Sacraments.

O Thou faithful, good, gracious, patient, and merciful God, we thank and praise Thee for Thy faithfulness, Thy goodness, Thy grace, Thy patience, and Thy mercy.

Do not, we beseech Thee, abandon the work of saving us which Thou hast begun within us, but perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Make of each one of us an everlasting monument to Thy love for sinners, unto Thy glory, and finally permit us to enter into the joy of our Lord. Amen.

23. Conversion the Work of God.

Lord Jesus, except Thy Father draw us, we cannot come unto Thee. Except Thy Holy Spirit work within us both to will and to do, we can neither begin nor complete the good work. By nature we know naught but to resist Thee. Only

if Thou turnest us, shall we be turned. We are powerless to convert ourselves.

Much less can we convert others. We can bring unto them the light of Thy Word, but we cannot open their blind eyes and make them see and perceive what belongs to their peace. We can tell them of Thy gracious Word and will, but we cannot incline their hearts to accept such grace in faith.

Oh, be merciful unto all of us that we may open unto Thee at all times when Thou knockest at the door of our heart, that we may respond and follow Thee cheerfully when Thou callest.

Guard us against blindness of mind and hardness of heart. Remove from us all stubborn resistance and bring us to faith, and through faith to love, true humility, and to a life that pleaseth Thee. Finally help us into Thy heavenly kingdom, where we shall rejoice to see Thee on Thy throne and with pure lips laud and praise Thee forever and ever. Amen.

24. Appreciation of God's Salvation.

O Lord, not only didst Thou in our first parents create us for eternal life, and not only didst Thou, when we, together with them, fell into sin, death, and damnation, redeem us by offering up Thine only-begotten Son for us, but by Thy Word Thou didst also call us out of this lost world and by Holy Baptism didst receive us into the kingdom of Thy grace. And now we are continually given to eat the Bread of Life and given to drink from the pure well of salvation Thy pure saving Word. Daily and hourly all the portals of Thy grace, yea, the portals of heaven and salvation, are open unto us.

Grant us Thy grace to realize what blessed people we are. And since our wicked flesh and blood ever resists Thee, remove out of our hearts, we beseech Thee, all opposition to Thy grace.

Take our hard hearts of stone from us and give us soft hearts of flesh that will be obedient unto Thee.

Help us thereupon to let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify Thee, our Father in heaven.

Finally give us steadfastness of faith, unflagging love, unfaltering hope, and untiring patience that in our last hour we may be prepared to appear before Thee and praise and glorify Thee forever and ever.

Help us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thine only-begotten Son, our Savior. Amen.

25. Divine Presence.

Lord Jesus, believing in Thee and trusting in Thy grace, we have gathered here in Thy name, according to Thy Word, and in obedience to Thy command. O make good now Thy promise, given to those who meet in Thy name.

Be not far from us, but be and remain in our midst. Come unto us with Thine eternal light, Thy divine consolation, and Thy heavenly joy, so that we may meet and deliberate in peace, not err from the truth of Thy Word, resolve to do those things that please Thee, so that our faith may be strengthened, our love increased, Thy kingdom furthered among us, and Thy name glorified.

Grant unto us an evening rich with Thy grace for Thine own sake. Amen.

26. Separate from the World.

Lord, our God, in Thy holy Word Thou chargest Thy Christians: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. . . . Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and

will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters."

In the light of these words we can properly address Thee as our dear Father only if we keep ourselves separate from the unbelieving world, which cares nothing about Thy Word, — separated not in the sense of having no dealings with the world in purely temporal matters, but by following a different rule and standard, by having a different mind and ways, doing different works, and leading a different life, so that we can truthfully say with Thy servant Paul: "The world is crucified unto Me and I unto the world."

Alas! if we examine ourselves according to that rule we must ruefully confess that we are too little separated from the world. True, we do not, as does the world, neglect to enter Thy sanctuary, but so often we fail to make Thy Word our rule and guide. Instead, we mostly think as does the world, act like the world, and live as does the world, and we think it strange that in Thy Word we find everything so different from our ideas and ways.

O Lord, help us not to continue in that way, but to search our hearts, to stand still, and retrace our steps lest, by identifying ourselves with the world here, we also perish with the world hereafter.

From such a calamity preserve us through the mighty operation of Thy Word and Thy Spirit in our hearts also during this meeting, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

27. In the World, but Not of the World.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast asked Thy heavenly Father in behalf of Thine own: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil."

It is not Thy will therefore that Thy followers must go out of the world, but they are to dwell in the midst of it. At the same time, however, Thou art concerned about them on account of the dangers to which they are exposed and therefore pleadest with Thy Father to keep them from harm.

O Lord and Savior, we pray Thee, fill our hearts likewise with such holy anxiety.

Let not the principles of the world, but Thy Word alone, be the lamp unto our feet and the light unto our path.

Let not the customs of the world, but Thy commandments alone, guide us in all our actions.

Alas! wickedness is on the increase, and scoffers are growing in number from day to day who call out aloud: "We will not have this man to reign over us." "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us." Meanwhile Thy Christians are growing weaker, and Thy Church is becoming an ever smaller flock. O help us in these last troublous times to be steadfast, to guard against all temptations, also against those which appear harmless at first sight, and to turn neither to the right hand nor to the left from that way in which even "fools shall not err."

Make of our congregation a Zoar, a secure city of refuge, for Thine elect in the Sodom of this world and help us in the end to pass safely over to Thy blessed kingdom.

Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

28. Peace and Harmony.

O Lord, Thou art the God of peace and true unity and therefore charest us in Thy Word: "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Satan, however, loves dissension and strife and, alas! our own heart, actuated

by love of self, is often only too prone to give no attention to the precious jewel of unity.

We pray Thee therefore, curb the efforts of Satan and of our wicked flesh and blood, fill us with the Spirit of peace, help us bridle our tongue, and grant us now a peaceful meeting that Thy name may be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our eternal Prince of Peace. Amen.

29. Recovery of the Erring.

Lord Jesus, to Thy disciples Thou spakest: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

O that these words might apply to every one of us! But, alas! many of our number, while they followed Thy call out of the world into Thy kingdom, like unto the wife of Lot look back with longing eyes upon the burning Sodom of this world. Yes, many are angling for the friendship of the world, are establishing connections with it, and are blindly promising it loyalty and obedience. Consequently the world no longer hates them, but loves them as though they had again become one of its own.

Open our eyes, we beseech Thee, that we may recognize the danger to which we are exposing ourselves; that the erring may speedily return to the right path; that the wavering may be established; that Satan may not triumph in the present temptation, but that, like all things, so also this may work together for the good of every one of us.

Hear us, Lord Jesus, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

30. Perseverance to the End.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we cannot thank Thee as much as we should for graciously arousing us from the slumber of sin, delivering us from this wicked world, rescuing us from the dominion of darkness, and translating us into the kingdom of Thy dear Son.

Thou art our gracious Father, and we are Thy dear children. Our sins are forgiven, and we are enjoying Thy grace. We are acceptable to Thee, being clothed with the righteousness of Thy dear Son. The Law can no longer condemn us; for Thy dear Son has fulfilled it in our stead. Satan can no longer accuse us; he has been overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Death can no longer frighten us; unto us it has become the door to eternal life.

We have been exceedingly blessed by Thee.

O make us truly thankful to Thee.

Fill us with hatred of sin, with contempt for all temporal vanity, with love to Thee and our brethren and fellow-redeemed, with zeal to serve Thee, with faithfulness in our heavenly as well as in our earthly calling.

Preserve us from falling away. Strengthen us through Thy Spirit lest, having laid our hand to the plow, we look back and thus be made unfit for Thy kingdom. Let us not be found among those who believe for a season, but in time of temptation fall away.

Let Thy work ever increase in us and help us to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Finally grant us a blessed and peaceful departure. Amen.

31. Appreciation and Perseverance.

Lord God, heavenly Father, neither in time nor in eternity can we thank and praise Thee sufficiently for permitting us to be born within the pale of Christianity; for washing us clean

from our sins with the blood of Thy dear Son in tender infancy and receiving us into Thy Kingdom of Grace; for permitting us to hear and learn the Word of Thy grace; for lovingly seeking us when we went astray and bringing us back into Thy fold; for raising us when we fell and strengthening us when we were weak; for warning us of a peril for our souls and rescuing us when we had run into it; for comforting us when we were in need and distress.

O help us now not to be ungrateful for the great grace which we have received.

Keep us from looking back, like Lot's wife, upon the perishing Sodom of this world.

Preserve us from forsaking Thy Church as Demas did, lured by love of the world.

Graciously keep us from believing only for a season and falling away in time of temptation.

Awaken, move, and strengthen us through Thy Holy Spirit that in return for Thy faithful solicitude for our welfare we may serve Thee with body and soul and all that we call our own.

Help us realize that, unless we give ourselves entirely to Thee, we are but inviting unrest for this life and rendering uncertain our entering the life to come. Yes, let us realize that we may only too easily lose our faith altogether and as a reward may be tormented already here and must await the torments of hell hereafter.

Therefore draw us fully into Thy fellowship and keep us therein unto our end.

For such goodness we will, together with the hosts of heaven, render unto Thee perfect praise and thanksgiving in yonder life unto all eternity. Amen.

32. The Greatest Treasure.

Lord Jesus, though Thou wast rich, Thou becomest poor for our sakes that we through Thy poverty might become rich. At Thy birth Thou wast laid in a manger. As Thou wentest about doing good, alms were Thy support. In death Thy body was laid into a grave that belonged to some one else.

Grant us grace gladly to become like unto Thine image, so that, if Thou favorest us with an abundance of this world's goods, we may not set our heart on our wealth, and if, contrariwise, Thou makest us poor and needy, we may not employ dishonorable means to better our condition.

Help us from our whole heart to say with Thy servant Asaph: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my heart and my Portion forever."

When finally the days of our earthly pilgrimage are at an end, grant that like unto the malefactor on the cross we may be with Thee forever in paradise. Hear us for Thy name's sake. Amen.

33. Resignation and Trust.

Lord Jesus, Thou chargest Thy disciples: "Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek, for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself."

How earnestly Thou dost warn us therefore not to be anxiously concerned about our temporal wants, and in what

friendly manner, by giving us sweet promises, dost Thou unburden our hearts of all sorrows whatsoever. O grant us grace to heed Thy warning and to rely upon Thy promises. Keep us also from thinking out all manner of devices or schemes how to safeguard our future, just so we need not rely on Thee. Let us in childlike faith pursue our calling and trust Thee to prosper our work.

To that end enlighten and strengthen us also this evening for the sake of Thy grace. Amen.

34. Loyalty to God's Word.

Lord, our God, according to Thy Word it is Thy will that we walk cautiously in this wicked, perverse, and to-sin-enticing world; that therefore we strive to exercise our senses to discern both good and evil; that in all our activities and undertakings we prove what is Thy good and gracious and perfect will. At the same time Thou assurest us that whatever is done with a doubting mind and not in faith is sin.

We therefore pray Thee to grant us Thy Holy Spirit that we may diligently seek, not only in our creed, but also in our conduct, to remain true to Thy Word, to turn aside neither to the right hand nor to the left; not to be conformed to the world, neither by the confession of our mouth nor by our conduct; to look up to Him who left us an example that we should follow His steps.

Preserve us from walking the broad way of the world, the flesh, and human reason, the way that leads to hell; keep us on the narrow way of Thy Word and Thy Spirit, the way that leads to heaven.

To that end, O Lord, who art rich in mercy, bless our deliverations at this time for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

35. Being a Light and a Salt.

Lord Jesus, Thou Son of the Highest, by Thy life, suffering, death, and glorious resurrection Thou hast out of unspeakable grace and mercy founded an everlasting Church, gathered by Thy Word from among all nations, and in wisdom and grace Thou hast to this day governed and mightily defended and preserved it. We pray Thee, grant that we may ever gain a better understanding of Thy saving truth, receive it into our hearts, by it be assured of the forgiveness of our sins and of our salvation, and courageously, cheerfully, and endowed with heavenly wisdom confess and defend it in these latter days.

Grant us grace to adorn Thy truth with true piety and loyalty to perform our duties as members of Thy Church.

Keep our beloved congregation in the saving truth which it has learned and help us to become ever better grounded therein, make us ever more zealous in supporting Thy work, and grant that we may ever be a light and a salt in both Thy Kingdom of Power and Thy Kingdom of Grace.

To that end bless our joint deliberations at this time for the sake of Thy saving love. Amen.

36. Divine Guidance of Our Heart.

Lord, our God, by nature we are ignorant of the things belonging unto our peace. Thou alone canst reveal them to us by Thy Word and Thy Holy Spirit.

By nature our hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; and therefore we are unaware of our own sad condition. Thou alone, who searchest the heart and triest the reins, canst know it.

Our hearts are ever inclined to evil, and therefore we are incapable of leaving the path of error and choosing the path

leading to heaven. Thou alone canst turn it, as the rivers of water, whithersoever Thou wilt.

Therefore we beseech Thee to be in our midst in this hour and to operate upon our hearts with that divine power of Thine which searches the hearts and governs them and to grant us that none of us may deliberately resist the operations of Thy Spirit, but that every one may yield to them.

O grant that we may in this time of grace and for our own good willingly humble ourselves before Thee and our brethren, lest on the day of wrath and judgment Thou humble us before all the angels and the elect and pronounce upon us the sentence of damnation.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, ^{only-begotten Son} our Mediator and Advocate. Amen. *In Thy name we pray, Amen.*

37. Guarding against Satiety.

Lord, Thou hast done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Not only hast Thou in these last sad times, notwithstanding the wickedness of our flesh and the ravings of Satan, preserved unto us Thy pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments in order to save our souls, but Thou hast also opened unto us a door in this great city for the purpose of calling others unto the great supper which Thou hast prepared for the whole world.

Preserve us, we beseech Thee, from the sin of satiety or, worse still, of that condition of soul in which one loathes the heavenly food of Thy Word; on the contrary, grant that Thy Word may always remain unto us the joy and rejoicing of our hearts lest Thou be compelled to punish our ingratitude by withdrawing from us Thy grace.

Ever make us better prepared to fight the good fight against our flesh, the world, and the wiles of the devil.

Since we of ourselves are all weak and helpless and inclined toward evil, guard Thou our promised inheritance unto the day of our departure and finally receive us into glory.

Hear us, Lord Jesus, for the sake of Thy saving name.
Amen.

38. Mission-Work.

Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Son of the living God, it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Thou didst come into the world to save sinners.

For that reason Thou didst also institute that office which preaches reconciliation, and didst found Thy Church to establish that office and to maintain it to the end of time.

We pray Thee, grant that our beloved congregation may not only itself firmly believe that faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, of Thy blessed coming into the world, Thy saving Gospel, but also heed Thy Great Commission, according to which it is to see to it that Thy Word be continually proclaimed in its midst, and elsewhere, too, wherever poor sinners are to be found.

Continue to be with our beloved congregation and with those of us who have been commissioned as its ^{faithful} teachers and leaders, so that we may loyally confess Thee here in word and deed also in these times of general apostasy and in yonder life dwell with Thee in Thy Father's house forever and ever. Amen.

39. "Help of the Helpless."

Lord Jesus, Thou hast said: "Without Me ye can do nothing." These words must be true, for Thou art the Truth. Yea, daily we experience the truth of these words. Whenever we follow our own reason and not Thy guidance, we go astray; as often as we follow our own heart instead of the promptings

of Thy Spirit, we sin; and when we begin to do that which is good in our own power, we spoil everything in Thy sight.

But Thy purpose in revealing to us our own helplessness is not to have us yield to despondency and despair, but rather to direct us to Thee for guidance and help. We pray Thee, Lord Jesus, grant us Thy almighty aid in our weakness, yea, in our utter helplessness; enlighten us, inspire us, guide us; bless us and prosper those undertakings which we have begun in Thy name. For this Thy loving-kindness we will thank Thee in all eternity.

Hear us for Thy name's sake. Amen.

40. The Battle of Faith.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast charged Thy Church on earth to wage continual warfare with Satan, world, and flesh. We have learned from experience that the life of a Christian is indeed a continual conflict. We must either fight or perish, either triumph or be prisoners of Satan forever.

Again and again we are struck by the fiery darts of the Wicked One, who seeks to raise doubts concerning Thy Word in our hearts, who secretly whispers to us, "Yea, hath God said?"

Again and again the world seeks to ensnare us, either by means of mockery and contempt or through tempting offers of treasures, pleasures, and fame.

Unceasingly our own sinful flesh seeks to mislead us into unbelief and all manner of wickedness.

O have mercy upon us! Give us understanding, joy, courage, and strength to wage this threefold battle; to feel secure, relax our efforts, waver, or retreat not one day, not one hour, but, denying ourselves, to follow Thee as our Captain and Leader and not to rest until the crown of victory adorns our brow.

Behold how weak we are and suffer us not to be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation make a way to escape that we may be able to bear it.

We cast ourselves at Thy feet, trusting in Thy grace. Deal with us as seems good to Thee and soon take us from bondage to perfect liberty, from warfare to victory, from misery to glory. Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

41. Fortieth Anniversary.

Lord Jesus, for forty years Thou hast dwelt in our midst, for forty years Thy pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments have been established among us. For forty years Thou hast permitted our congregation to bear witness of Thy saving truth. Indeed an unspeakable gift of Thy grace enjoyed by us in these last, sad times!

We offer unto Thee thanks and praise for this from the depth of our hearts now and throughout our lives.

But, O Lord, Thou hast also uttered the solemn threat that, if the laborers in Thy vineyard be unfaithful, Thou wilt let out the vineyard to other husbandmen, to such as will render Thee the fruits in their seasons.

We pray Thee, make of us faithful laborers in Thy vineyard; for with might of ours we can do nothing. Thou alone canst work in us both to will and to do that which is good. Let Thy Law which is proclaimed among us be effective in us in order that all secure sinners may truly repent; and Thy Gospel likewise, in order that all whose hearts are distressed by the sense of guilt, may come to true faith and attain unto a heart-cheering enjoyment of Thy grace and peace. Graciously grant that all will receive instruction, reproof, admonition, warning, and consolation in good and honest hearts. Keep us from falling a prey to the deceitfulness of sin and the allure-

ments of the world and from giving an offense to others. Spare us in our weakness and let none of us be tempted above that we are able. Finally help us all to fight the good fight, to finish our course, to keep the faith unto the end, and finally grant us the crown of righteousness, which Thou, the righteous Judge, wilt on the Last Day give unto all who love Thine appearing.

Lord Jesus, hear us for the sake of Thy love of sinners and because of Thy faithfulness, Amen.

42. Pardon.

God, Thou lovest truth and hatest all falsehood. Thou art a buckler to them that walk uprightly and art an enemy of those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.

With sorrowful hearts we confess to Thee that our heart, our entire being, is corrupt to the core; that our words, our manners, and our deeds often belie our true state within; that, while men may admire us, Thou must condemn us because Thy all-seeing eye penetrates the inmost recesses of our sinful hearts.

Have mercy on us, we beseech Thee, and for the sake of the merits of Thine only-begotten Son, our Savior, do not only forgive our immense guilt, but by Thy Holy Spirit also cleanse us of all the abominations which Thine eye beholds within us.

Sit in judgment upon us unto the destruction of our flesh that we may not come into judgment hereafter, but that our spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

To that end bless also our deliberations to-day for the sake of Thy truth and Thy grace. Amen.

43. Repentance — Pardon — Consecration.

Lord, our God, the entire world, especially also man, has been created to Thine honor. But, alas! man fell away from Thee and became Thine enemy. By nature he now seeks not

Thine honor, but his own. He does not fear that Thou wilt execute Thy solemn threats, nor does he believe that Thou wilt fulfil Thy gracious promises. He ignores Thy commandments and follows his own desires. He calls Thee Father, but harbors no love toward Thee; he calls Thee Lord, but refuses to serve Thee.

We, whom by means of Thy Word, the means of grace, Thou hast brought to the knowledge of our spiritual misery, but above all to faith in our Savior, indeed have the desire to honor Thee with our lives; but, alas! we fail miserably in carrying out our purpose. Again and again we neglect to do things through which we might enhance Thy honor and instead do that which tends to dishonor Thee.

O Lord, the very thought of our shortcomings causes us to hide our faces in shame.

We pray Thee therefore not to enter into judgment with us; for in Thy sight no man living shall be justified. Do not deal with us after our sins and reward us not according to our iniquities. Have patience with us, for we are weak and frail. Work true repentance within us and daily grant us Thy grace and forgiveness. Increase our love toward Thee, so that we may henceforth serve, praise, and honor Thee with our whole life.

Hear us for the sake of Thy grace in Christ Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

44. Losing One's Life to Find It.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast said: "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

With these words Thou dost declare that it is not enough to class ourselves as Thy disciples, not Thine enemies, but that Thou wilt own us as Thine only if we forsake all that we have;

if we cut loose our hearts from all earthly treasures and regard Thee as our greatest possession; if we despise honor among men and, instead, regard that as our greatest honor to be Thy disciples; if we renounce the vain pleasures of this world and let Thy grace be our highest joy; if we regard our own wisdom as foolishness and Thy Word as our wisdom; if we look upon our own righteousness as filthy rags and upon Thy redeeming and atoning work as our righteousness.

O Lord Jesus, grant that none of us may deceive themselves, but that we may all be found on Thy side and that some day we may enjoy Thy blessed and blissful presence forever. Amen.

45. The Good Shepherd.

Lord Jesus, yesterday we again heard out of Thy mouth that Thou alone art the Good Shepherd of Thy sheep; for Thou alone didst rescue them out of the power of the infernal wolf and by means of the precious ransom of Thy divine blood didst purchase them for Thine own. Thou hast provided for them verdant pasturage in Thy Word and Sacrament. Thou alone canst defend, lead, and govern them. Thou alone canst gather them. Thou alone canst preserve them unto eternal life.

We pray Thee, grant us grace to believe with all our hearts that we are Thy dearly purchased possession. Grant also that we may follow Thee as Thou leadest us upon the pasture of Thy Word and Sacrament, to entrust ourselves to Thy protection, guidance, and government, to obey and follow Thy voice, to remain with Thy flock, to be kept by Thee, until Thou wilt finally gather us into Thy heavenly fold.

Alas! we must confess to Thee that we often shudder when we think of our weakness and utter helplessness, of Satan's trickery, of the treacherous pitfalls which the world

places in our path, of the inclinations of our sinful flesh. Strengthen therefore, we beseech Thee, our faith, so that we may firmly cling to Thy promise: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." Amen.

46. A Heart Surrendered Wholly to God.

"My child, give Me thine heart," that, O Lord most high, is the friendly request which in Thy Word Thou dost address to all of us.

And why? Not because our heart would be such a precious gift to be given to Thee; for as long as Thou dost not dwell in it, it is the dwelling-place of vanity. Thy request, "My child, give Me thine heart," is prompted by Thy desire to make us all truly happy.

By nature we all look for happiness to external things, temporal possessions, earthly pleasures, honor among men, and often we are so taken up with these things that we actually believe to have found true happiness through them. Ultimately, however, we awake from our dream and realize that we are not truly happy, but that we are without peace of soul and rest of conscience and therefore in reality unhappy; for true happiness is determined not by outward things, but by the condition of the heart.

How friendly therefore Thy request, O God: "My child, give Me thine heart"! With these words Thou wouldst say to us: "O man, set not thy heart on vain things, but rather entrust it to Me; I will fill it with heavenly joy and with blessed and everlasting peace."

As often, then, as Thou standest at the door of our hearts

knocking, grant that we open to Thee at once and become and remain Thy blessed habitation until Thou wilt take us to the mansions of eternal peace. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

47. Sustained Interest in Spiritual Matters.

Lord Jesus, Thou Good Shepherd, we thank Thee for calling us out of this lost world into Thy fold and for leading us upon the green pastures of Thy Gospel and unto the still waters of Thy gracious promises.

If Thou hadst not sought us, we should still be among those still going astray.

Keep us from loathing the heavenly food of Thy Word and the heavenly drink of Thy gracious comforts. Keep alive within our hearts a holy desire for Thy Word in order that our faith may be strengthened, our love increased, and that from day to day we may become ever more fit and more willing and cheerful to do those things that please Thee.

Let none of us perish eternally, but grant that we all may enter Thy heavenly kingdom. Hear us for the sake of Thine everlasting faithfulness. Amen.

48. Guided by God's Word Alone.

Lord Jesus, by Thy servant John Thou didst address these words unto Thy congregation at Philadelphia: "Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth." Alas! such a season of temptation has again come over all the world in our day, and many of Thy Christians have been overcome by it. The reason for their sad fate is that they did not keep the Word of Thy patience.

Grant therefore unto all of us, we beseech Thee, grace that in the spiritual darkness of these last times we let Thy Word be our light, that we let Thy testimonies be our counselors in all matters pertaining to the question what we must do to please Thee and to choose that which is right, and that we let Thy Word be our guide in life's pilgrimage in order that we may walk the path leading to heaven. May we never follow our reason, which is blind in spiritual things, nor the world, which is wholly estranged from Thee and cares nothing for Thee and Thy Word, nor our hearts, which always lust after that which displeases Thee, but graciously grant that we may always make Thy Word the lamp unto our feet and the light unto our path.

Bless also our deliberations this evening unto this end for Thy mercy and Thy truth's sake. Amen.

49. Christ Our Refuge in Perilous Times.

O Lord Jesus, Thou hast said that before Thy coming in the glory of heaven to judge the quick and the dead iniquity would abound and the love of many wax cold. And what Thou hast predicted has been fulfilled before our very eyes. In the world iniquity has abounded, and the love of many Christians has grown cold. Universal distress points to the world's impending doom and Thy Christians are being sorely tried in the furnace of affliction.

How, now, shall we proceed to save our souls? Our reason knows of no way of escape. But in Thy Word Thou callest Thyself "great in counsel and mighty in deed"; Thou declarest: "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Despairing of our own wisdom and strength, we turn to Thee for refuge and pray Thee, vouchsafe unto us good counsel and help us to do that which is right. Help us to

understand the counsel given to us in Thy holy Word and to abide by it; for although Thy judgments often appear very strange to us, Thou bringest all matters to a happy conclusion. However, let us also experience that Thou art mighty in deed; govern and defend us in these perilous times. Fulfil in us Thy Word: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Lord, let our humble prayer come before Thee, for Thou hast commanded us to pray; and hear us, for Thou hast promised to hear our prayer. For this Thy unmerited goodness we will magnify and praise and thank Thee unto all eternity. Amen.

50. Zeal for God's House.

Lord Jesus, in the 69th Psalm Thou didst say of Thyself: "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." How poorly do we imitate Thee in this! As far as our own house is concerned, we are zealous to furnish it richly; but when we are called upon to do something for the house where Thine honor dwelleth, how sluggish are we to work and sacrifice for it! When *we* are offended, our nature flares up with anger and indignation; even friends, brothers and sisters in the faith, and relatives are not respected; but when *Thou* and Thy Word are maligned, we remain cool and indifferent; we find it difficult to disregard friends and relatives and to give heed to Thee alone.

O Lord Jesus Christ, we pray Thee, fill us with a holy and an unquenchable, ever-burning hatred toward all ungodliness which raises its head in opposition to Thy Word and kingdom and kindle within us an unquenchable, ever-burning love to Thee, to Thy Word, Thy Church, and to all Thy

redeemed — a love that above all seeks Thine honor. Help us to have such godly hatred and cherish and show godly love unto our end and then take us into Thy Kingdom of Glory. Hear us for the sake of Thine everlasting love. Amen.

51. Hardening of Heart.

Lord, our God, with Thy prophet Micah we are urged to exclaim: "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever because He delighteth in mercy." And how gloriously hast Thou at all times revealed and proved Thyself to be a God rich in grace and mercy. Grievous were the sins of David, Peter, of "the woman which was a sinner," the malefactor on the cross, and Saul, the persecutor of Christians; nevertheless, when in true sorrow they acknowledged their sins to Thee and turned to Thy free grace, Thou didst not reject them, but forgavest them. And we, too, looking at our past lives and considering the perverseness of our hearts, cannot but marvel at Thy unfathomable grace and exclaim with Thy prophet Micah: "Who is a God like unto Thee?"

But Thy holy Word also sounds the solemn warning: "Take heed . . . lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." We pray Thee, help us that not one of us may harden himself through the deceitfulness of sin; that no one, after being convicted of his sins from Thy Word, refuse to desist from them; that no one, although aware that he has gone astray, refuse to abandon his errors, — lest Thou be compelled finally to withdraw Thy rescuing hand from him altogether, to abandon Thy work of grace within his soul, and to exclaim: "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more."

Yea, Lord God, look kindly upon every soul among us. Draw them to Thyself, keep them with Thyself, and finally take them to heaven, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord. Amen.

52. A True Church to the End.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast promised that a Church bearing Thy name shall continue unto the Last Day, that Thou wilt be with that Church always, even unto the end of the world, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, that it is, and will remain, Thy Father's good pleasure to give unto it the Kingdom, the Kingdom of Glory, that it shall never perish, and that no one shall pluck it out of Thy hand.

But such promises Thou hast not addressed specifically to any one congregation. On the contrary, Thou sayest to each congregation: "Hold that fast which Thou hast that no man take thy crown." "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." "Look to yourselves that we lose not those things which we have wrought." "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen and repent, . . . or else I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of his place."

Many one-time glorious congregations have disappeared; where at one time Thy pure Word was proclaimed, soul-destroying error has raised its head, the word of the lying prophet Mohammed and the vain babblings of blind human reason.

Be gracious therefore, we beseech Thee, unto our dear congregation, guard us against security, preserve unto us Thy Word and Sacrament, and keep alive within our hearts, zeal

for the true faith and godly life. Let us not grow weary in the spiritual battles that we must fight until Thou wilt finally lead us into the triumphant congregation in heavenly bliss. Hear us because Thou hast graciously promised it. Amen.

53. The Church's Firm Foundation.

Lord Jesus, hitherto Thou hast helped us. Thou hast given us Thy pure Word and preserved it unto us to this hour. We dare not boastingly claim that it is due to our diligence and faithfulness that it has been preserved; we still have this treasure because Thou hast so faithfully watched over us, Thy flock. Even when we became sluggish, Thou didst not cast us off, but didst kindle our heart with new zeal. When it seemed as though Thou hadst forgotten us, Thou finally didst but visit us again the more graciously.

O dear Lord, confidently we come to Thee and beseech Thee not to forsake us in days to come, but to abide with us. Make of us more and more a city set upon a high hill, which lets its light shine in these last times of spiritual darkness.

Thy Church cannot be overthrown, for Thou hast said: "Upon this rock I will build My Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Let also our congregation be built upon Thee unto the end of days and then let it triumphantly enter into that joy which Thou hast prepared for Thy Church from the foundation of the world. Hear us for the sake of Thy grace and truth. Amen.

54. Faithfully Following Jesus.

Lord Jesus, when on one occasion many who had followed Thee for a while went back and walked no more with Thee and with a painful heart Thou didst ask Thy disciples: "Will ye also go away?" Thy servant Peter responded with great

emotion: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

The question addressed to Thy disciples applies to us as well. For in our day likewise many who in Holy Baptism pledged loyalty to the banner of Thy Cross have gone back. They dislike to hear Thy name mentioned. Thy Word they despise as foolishness. They turn their backs upon Thy Church. They have ceased being concerned about their soul's salvation. Day by day they but seek to satisfy the desires of their sinful hearts.

How shall we answer Thee when Thou addressest the question to us: "Will ye also go away?" We can do no better than to answer with Peter: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Indeed, where in all the world shall we go to seek what we have found in Thee?

In Thee we have found a God who not only created us, but who as a Father loves us as His children, who preserves us, leads us, and provides for us. In Thee we have found a Savior who has borne and atoned for our sins and now desires out of free grace to bring us into heaven. In Thee we have found a heavenly Comforter, who has given us a new heart to hate and overcome error and sin, to love God and our enemies, to be patient in tribulation and joyful in hope, to despise, yea, deride the vanity of the world, and to face even death without fear.

But what do we find without Thee? Despair of all truth; treasures which rust and moth corrupt; in short, joys that end in sorrow, honors that are mere vanity; and finally the inevitable doom of being cast into another world of uncertainty and darkness, into everlasting death and despair.

Hence we, too, wish to remain true to you, O faithful Savior, who hast brought us to the true fatherland. Unto Thee be praise and honor world without end! Amen.

55. Pardon for Our Shortcomings.

Lord Jesus, nigh unto a half-century Thou hast dwelt in the midst of this congregation through Thy Word. While millions of heathen remain in darkness and in the shadow of death and millions of Christians are only occasionally fed with crumbs of Thy saving truth, Thou hast permitted the light of the pure Gospel to shine forth in full luster in our midst and hast caused the heavenly fountains of comfort, Thine unadulterated Sacraments, to gush forth in great abundance over us. Sunday after Sunday Thou didst permit us to hear that message which can prepare even the greatest sinner for a happy death.

But how have we regarded this Thine unspeakable grace? Have we all been truly converted unto Thee, and do we live in daily repentance? Do we gladly hear Thy Word at every opportunity that presents itself? Do we bring forth better fruit than those who are not as abundantly blessed with Thy pure Word as we are?

Must we not blush in the face of such questions? Surely, if to-day Thou wert to withdraw from us the benefits of Thy grace, we should have to acknowledge: "Lord, Thou art just, and Thy judgments are right."

But, O Lord, Thou art and remainest faithful, even when we prove unfaithful; and when Thou raisest Thy sword to punish, Thou hast respect unto those who plead for grace and mercy and art ready to put Thy sword into its sheath.

We pray Thee therefore not to enter into judgment with

us poor sinners, for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified. Rebuke us not in Thine anger, neither chasten us in Thy hot displeasure. Forsake us not. Take not Thy pure Word and the unadulterated Sacraments from us, much as we have deserved to be dealt with thus, but preserve them to us and our children unto the end of time and make of us a monument of Thy mercy.

Praise, glory, and honor be unto Thee, Lord Jesus, for Thine unspeakable grace. Amen.

56. Power and Protection.

Lord Jesus, Thou alone makest of poor sinners members of Thy Church, "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God"; Thou alone canst preserve them in that blessed state. Therefore we pray Thee, who hast made us members of Thy body, the holy Christian Church, grant us grace to remain steadfast. The worst enemy we have is our own sinful flesh, we ourselves; therefore guard us against ourselves. When we grow cold and sluggish, fill us with new zeal; when we grow secure, fill us with concern for our souls; when we waver, sustain us; when we fall into sin, restore us; when we go astray, enlighten us and bring us back to the right path. Guard us against the treachery of Satan, who walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Guard us against the world, which is ever eager to ensnare us. Guard us against our own proud reason, against our fickle and fearful heart, against all evil inclinations of the members of our body. Awaken and strengthen faith within us and keep us therein unto our end. Yea, help us to fight valiantly and to pass through death and life unto Thee. Hear us for the sake of Thy grace and truth. Amen.

57. Faithful Stewardship.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we, who at heart believe in Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior, are called by Thee "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people"; and therefore Thou chargest us to show forth Thy praises, for Thou hast called us out of darkness into Thy marvelous light.

Help us to show by our deeds that we no longer belong to those who are without Thee and without hope in the world, whose hearts are occupied wholly with the treasures of this world and set their affections only on things on the earth.

Thou art not averse to seeing us enjoy those earthly possessions which Thou hast been pleased to give us, those temporal goods which we gain in our chosen calling by honest means. Thou dost not condemn us for having riches if we have gained them through Thy blessing.

But Thou demandest that we be good stewards, that we trust not in uncertain riches nor set our hearts upon them or become proud because of them. Thou desirest that we thank Thee for them, realizing that we have not deserved them, and that we use them to help our needy brother and to further the work of Thy kingdom, thus making unto ourselves friends who will some day receive us into everlasting habitations.

Grant that we may always show such a spirit. Hear us for the sake of Thy goodness and grace, which is ours through Christ Jesus. Amen.

58. Preservation in Faith.

Lord Jesus, our salvation is not in our own hands, but wholly in Thine. How thankful we ought to be for this Thy unmerited grace! If our salvation were in our own hands, how easily could and would it be snatched from us! But none can

pluck us out of Thy loving and almighty hands, not the devil and hell, not sin, not the world, neither fortune nor misfortune, neither wealth nor poverty, neither honor nor dishonor, neither life nor death.

Since our salvation is in Thy keeping, we pray Thee, grant us Thy Holy Spirit that we may not depart from Thee, but remain faithful to Thee, that we may open unto Thee as often as Thou dost knock, come to Thee as often as Thou callest us, cheerfully do those good things which in Thy Word Thou biddest us do and avoid the evil against which Thou dost warn us, that we may follow Thee wherever Thou leadest and remain faithful to Thee unto the end. When our last hour approaches, grant that we may depart this life in cheerful confidence and full of hope and enter into everlasting joy and peace. Amen.

59. Faithfulness to the End.

Lord, our God, how great is Thy goodness toward us! While millions are still groping in the darkness of heathendom and the shadow of death, Thou hast permitted us to be born within Thy Christian Church and in tender infancy didst adopt us as Thine own through Holy Baptism.

While even within the pale of Christianity many continue in their natural blindness, without faith, in the vanity of their minds, Thou hast enlightened us, so that we believe Thy Word with our whole heart and take great comfort in it.

While elsewhere Thy dear Christians are hard pressed, Thou hast granted unto us complete religious liberty.

In Thy Word Thou warnest us against receiving Thy grace in vain, rejecting it when it is offered to us, or losing it after accepting it and thus for having believed in vain.

O Lord, our God, Thou alone canst work within us both

to will and to do, both the beginning and the continuation, both faith and perseverance in faith unto the end.

Grant us therefore, we beseech Thee, to be faithful in all matters, in faith and in life, in love and in patience, in working and in fighting, until we shall have attained to the end of our faith, the salvation of our soul. To that end help us through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

60. Divine Presence and Guidance.

Lord Jesus Christ, in Thy name we have assembled here this evening. We pray Thee, let us experience the fulfilment of Thy gracious promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Enlighten us, so that we may know what is right, sanctify us, so that we may will, and resolve upon, that which is right, strengthen us to do what is right, and bless us, so that all that we may think, desire, and do may prosper and redound to the glory of Thy name, to the furtherance of Thy Church, and to the well-being and salvation of our souls. Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

61. True Unity.

Thou Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, Thou art a God of concord and peace. It is Thy desire that Thy children here on earth live together in peace and harmony.

We confess to Thee with sorrowful hearts that due to the poison of inherited sin our hearts are altogether too much inclined to dissension and strife.

Our natural blindness stands in the way of unity of understanding, and our enmity against Thy will stands in the way of unity in a pious life and in deeds which please Thee.

Therefore have mercy upon us and open the eyes of our

understanding and the door of our heart that Thy light may be shed abroad in us and Thy Holy Spirit fill our hearts and move us to do what is pleasing unto Thee.

Thou desirest to restore within us Thine image, that image in which Thou didst create us; O restore it within all of us. Thine object in forgiving our sins is to break its dominion over us; O help us to overcome it.

In Thy name we have come together to strengthen one another in faith and love. Bless our meeting to that end and grant that we may all again meet one another in Thy blessed eternity.

Hear us for Thy name's sake. Amen.

62. Living Faith.

Lord Jesus, by means of Holy Baptism Thou hast deigned to make us members of Thy Church, which in Thy Word Thou callest glorious, holy, and without blemish. Thus Thou hast brought to a place of safety our sinful souls, which are assailed from all sides by a thousand foes, and Thou leadest them daily to the green pastures of Thy saving Word. With our whole heart we thank Thee for Thy goodness.

We pray Thee now, keep us from becoming secure and careless. Let us not say, "The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord!" while we fail with our whole heart to serve Thee, our Lord, who hast purchased us at so great a price.

With the help of Thy Holy Spirit make of us a congregation in which, in addition to the light of Thy pure Word, the light of a living faith, of sincere love, and of a truly pious life may shine forth in full brightness.

Aye, O Lord, make of our congregation a tree planted by the rivers of Thy grace, which will bring forth its fruit in due season. Finally transplant that tree from the curse-

laden soil of this world into the blessed soil of heaven, where righteousness dwelleth and where we may praise Thee forevermore. Amen.

63. Power over Sin.

Lord, our God, Thou didst create us in Thine own image, without sin, and didst adorn us with holiness and righteousness. Hence Thou requirest of us that we sin neither in thoughts, words, or deeds, but that we be clothed with holiness and righteousness. Thou chargest us: "Ye shall be holy; for I, the Lord, your God, am holy." "Be ye perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

But, alas! O Lord, our heart is depraved, an ever-flowing fountain of wicked thoughts, words, and deeds. On every side we are confronted with temptations to sin.

We pray Thee, endow us with Thy Holy Spirit that we may recognize sin as soon as it assails us, resist its allurements, and triumph over it, so that no sin may ever have dominion over us and that, if we sin out of weakness, we may in sincere repentance seek and find grace and forgiveness with Thee and, having found it, walk the more faithfully and cautiously.

Aye, help us to pass safely through this treacherous world until we shall finally enter the heavenly Jerusalem as Thy saints and there serve Thee forever in righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our precious Redeemer. Amen.

64. Divine Guidance and Blessings.

Lord, our God, although we are but earth and ashes and sinful dust, yet every time we assemble here in Thy most holy name, we have to do with matters of utmost importance, matters which far transcend our understanding and power; for we have to do with the affairs of Thy kingdom, with the affairs not of

this life, but of eternal life, with the affairs not of our mortal body, but of our immortal soul.

We beseech Thee, O Lord, our God, be not far from us in this hour; grant us Thy gracious presence and the guidance and power of Thy Holy Spirit.

Consider not our utter unworthiness, but consider what Thy dear Son has wrought for us; He has reconciled us to Thee by His life, suffering, and death. For His sake be gracious unto us and let this gathering be replete with lasting blessings for us, for all our members, also for those not present, for our dear children, for this city, for this country and for Thy Church everywhere.

Hear us, Thou gracious and faithful God, for the sake of Thy grace and faithfulness. Amen.

65. Mastery over Sin.

Holy and just God, we are sinners and will remain such until death; while here on earth, we are sold under sin and can never be fully freed from it. This we learn from Thy Word, and we experience it daily and hourly in our thoughts, desires, manners, words, and deeds. Hence we are in constant need of Thy grace, which is continually offered to us in Thy gracious Gospel. O help us to believe that Gospel!

But since Thou canst not make those partakers of Thy grace who trifle with it, making themselves believe that they may sin with impunity because of it, who obey sin in the lusts thereof and willingly submit to its rule, we beseech Thee to keep us from becoming the servants of sin and allowing it to be our master and to help us fight against every sin that would lead us captive and strive after that holiness without which no one shall see Thee.

Grant this unto us all for the sake of Jesus Christ, our precious Redeemer. Amen.

66. A Grateful Heart.

Lord, our God, through Christ Thou art our reconciled Father. Daily, yea, hourly, Thou dost shower down upon us bodily and spiritual, earthly and heavenly, blessings. Heaven and earth, angels and men, all creatures must serve us. Yea, Thou Thyself, O great God, servest us, who are sinful dust, incessantly with Thy Word and with the gift of Thy Holy Spirit.

Grant us, we beseech Thee, a heart that is truly thankful for the overwhelming riches of Thy goodness. Since Thou hast given Thyself unto us and servest us, help us to give ourselves also unto Thee and to serve Thee with all that we possess. Help us to hate sin, which Thou hatest, and earnestly to fight against it; to love righteousness, which Thou lovest, to hunger and thirst after it, and to pursue it; and with patience and resignation to bear the cross which in Thy wisdom and love Thou layest upon us. Graciously restore all those among us who through the trickery and wiles of the world, the devil, and their own flesh and blood were led into sin. Strengthen all those who are at the point of forsaking Thee and Thy truth and enable them to triumph over such temptations. Comfort and refresh all who are assailed and distressed. Finally help us all to honor Thee and Thy Word by walking as Thy children at all times until we shall be at home with Thee and extol Thy praise forever and ever.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

67. Pardon for Our Shortcomings.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we have gathered here to deliberate upon the needs of our dear congregation. We approach that task with genuine concern. For, alas! our congre-

gation has many defects from which it must be freed and many wounds that must be healed.

Among our members there are such as lack proper Christian understanding and faith, love and humility, meekness and long-suffering, earnestness in prayer and zeal in the use of Thy Word, proper watchfulness against sin, complete denial of the world, its possessions, its vain pleasures and honors; they lack the readiness and courage to confess Thee in word and deed. Alas! our shortcomings are too numerous to mention.

We pray Thee, look upon our dear congregation not in wrath, but with grace and long-suffering. Do not withdraw Thy pure Word and the unadulterated Sacraments, but let Thy Word be proclaimed with ever-increasing power and faithfulness and grant that also Thy Sacraments may be administered faithfully. Visit our congregation and pour out upon young and old, parents and children, rich and poor, teachers and hearers, Thy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, of grace and prayer, of power and strength, of sanctification and the fear of God.

Preserve us from becoming discouraged, slothful, and impatient and help us to continue to work faithfully for our beloved congregation and be pleased to bestow Thy blessings now and always upon our humble services.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

68. Charity — Wisdom — Peace.

Lord Jesus, in Thy name and in Thy most holy presence we have gathered here to deliberate upon important matters. We pray Thee, grant us for that purpose a pure heart, Thy Holy Spirit, and that wisdom which cometh down from above. And since Thou hast said that on the Day of Judgment we

must give account of every idle word that we have spoken, we pray Thee to keep us from that sin and grant that also during this meeting no corrupt communication may proceed out of our mouths, nothing that might militate against truth, righteousness, love, or fairness, but that only such utterances may be made as minister grace unto the hearers and redound unto Thine honor and unto our own and our brethren's well-being and betterment.

Let us duly heed Thy Word: "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. . . . For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

O Thou Prince of Peace, let our meeting foster harmony and peace within this congregation that Thy kingdom may be furthered and Thy name glorified, and let us not become a laughing-stock unto our enemies.

Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

69. Faith which Worketh by Love.

Lord God, in Thy holy Word Thou hast charged us to be rich in good works.

But we know that we are by nature unfruitful trees, incapable of bringing forth good fruit, and that love and all good works flow only from faith.

Therefore we pray Thee to grant us above all such faith.

Reveal unto us our great misery, our sin and guilt and unworthiness, make us hungry and thirsty after the righteousness that availeth before Thee, and then, in Thy Gospel, show us Thy grace which is in Christ Jesus, Thy dear Son; yea, create in us the firm conviction that through Him we, too, are reconciled unto Thee, fully redeemed, and justified.

When thereupon we can confidently say, "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," move Thou us to adorn Thy Gospel with a new life, rich in fruits of righteousness.

But Thou knowest, O Lord, that, even after Thy Spirit has taken possession of our hearts, we must still contend with the flesh and with our depraved mind and understanding, which is so apt to mislead us.

Therefore we pray Thee, help us that in all our doings we may let Thy Word be the lamp unto our feet and the light unto our path, that we may not choose our own way, but let Thy Holy Spirit lead us, that we may not take the lead, but follow where Thou ledest.

Inspire, sanctify, enlighten, and guide us also in our present undertaking that it may tend to Thy glory and honor and to the welfare of many souls. Amen.

70. In Time of War.

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." This invitation, O gracious God, is extended to us in Thy holy Word.

Hence we come before Thy presence to call upon Thee; for, alas! troubles of body and of soul confront us on every side.

We all must confess with Thy servant David of old: "As the Lord liveth, there is but a step between me and death." Were it not for Thy watchfulness and protection, overnight our dear ones would become weeping widows and orphans, our city would be converted into smoldering ruins, and our dear country would be turned into an immense waste.

But greater even than the peril of body is that of our soul.

The time has come in which, as Thy Word has foretold, the very elect, if it were possible, would be misled into error.

Not only does Satan, as he always did, go about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, but thousands now deliberately cast themselves into his voracious jaws.

O have mercy upon us! In this era of unrest grant that we may daily sit devoutly at the feet of our Savior, give heed to His Word, and seek the one thing needful.

Grant unto us the Spirit of grace and prayer that we may watch and pray and not fall into temptation.

Strengthen our faith in order that in these troublous and perilous times we may not succumb to anxiety born of unbelief and to despair, but that we may implicitly look to Thee for help.

Strengthen the cords of love among us that they may not give way to the pressure of our surroundings, where hatred, wrath, revenge, and bloodthirstiness prevail, but that we may with all meekness correct, bear with, and forgive, one another when we err.

Seeing how earthly treasures prove more and more to be worthless and fleeting, let us the more firmly lay hold of those treasures which prowling thieves cannot steal.

Choose our congregation to be Thy fortress, which Thou defendest with Thine own hand, and let not the work be overthrown which Thou hast begun in our midst, but let it be carried on to completion that Thy name may be honored and many souls may be saved.

Aid Thy Church everywhere and let its work of peace go on in the midst of war; in secret let it grow and bear fruit.

Have mercy upon our dear city and graciously ward off every impending danger.

Have mercy upon our whole country. Let Thy present chastenings prove a blessing to it, but let them soon come to an end. Put up the sword of Thine anger into its sheath and permit us soon to behold the return of peace.

Lord God, we pray Thee, hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

71. Praising the Holy Trinity.

Lord God, Father in heaven, Thou hast created all things, both visible and invisible. Thou hast made us; Thou hast given us body and soul, eyes, ears, and all our members, our reason and all our senses, and unto this hour hast preserved us, provided for us, and protected us.

Lord God Son, Jesus Christ, Thou hast redeemed all sinners, hast borne, and atoned for, our sins, hast satisfied the demands of the Law, and thus hast procured for us reconciliation unto Thy Father, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, deliverance from death, devil, hell, and judgment, and eternal life.

Lord God, Holy Spirit, by means of the Word of redemption Thou hast called the whole world, including us, and invited it to enter Thy Kingdom of Grace. When we were baptized, Thou didst kindle faith within our hearts and through faith didst wash and sanctify our souls with the blood of reconciliation. After we had gone astray, Thou didst, by the Word of grace, call us back into the Church of those who will be saved and art now our Light, our Consolation, our Strength, and our Peace.

All this Thou hast done for us, O holy Triune God, without any merit or worthiness in us, yea, in spite of our unworthiness, our countless sins, prompted thereto solely by Thy fatherly, divine goodness and mercy.

Grant that we may thank and praise Thee for this loving-kindness by serving and obeying Thee and by seeking at all times Thine honor and the welfare of those whom Thou together with us hast created, redeemed, and sanctified.

To that end bless also us, Thy congregation, and the work we are doing unto the end of days. Amen.

72. Firm Defenders of the Truth.

O Thou gracious and merciful God, in these last times, when everywhere Thy Word is being perverted and adulterated to the utmost, Thou hast granted and revealed it unto us so pure, so clear, so undefiled, that we cannot adequately thank and praise Thee for this Thy gracious goodness. Who are we poor sinners and wretched worms that Thou shouldst honor us so highly and favor us so abundantly with Thy best and most precious treasure?

What shall we do to repay Thee for such benefits? What shall we give Thee in return? Ah, Lord, we can call nothing our own; everything belongs to Thee. Thou desirest but one thing of us, that we receive Thy Word in a believing heart, that we prize it higher than all the silver and gold of this earth, and that we firmly cling to it despite all the fury and frenzy of the unbelieving world and the feigned friendship of false brethren.

In addition to Thy Word grant us grace to be jealous watchmen and fearless champions of Thy pure Word and, when the purity of Thy Word is involved, not to regard men, be their fame, their wisdom, their multitude, and their power ever so great or their favor and love ever so winsome, but solely *regard* Thine honor and Thy holy commandments.

Make us firm in this age of wavering.

Help us to abide with Thee in this age of apostasy.

Give us certainty in this age of doubt.

Finally help us to overcome and triumph and inherit eternal bliss, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

73. Fruits of Faith.

Lord, our God, in accordance with Thy Word we confess before the world that we are justified and saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone, without the deeds of the Law.

That doctrine is offensive to the world, for the world looks upon the doctrine of salvation by grace, through faith, as an inducement to a life of sin. Hence Thou hast called us to disprove such views of the blind world by a holy and unblamable life.

From our conduct the world is to see and to be convinced that true faith is not a powerless, even dead thing, but that it changes, purges, and sanctifies the heart of man and fills it with genuine love to Thee and our neighbor.

Our example should show the world that true faith does not stupefy conscience, but rather makes it more alert and active.

Our example should show the world that true faith does not produce sluggishness, but diligence with respect to one's earthly calling, that it does not make him in whose heart it dwells slothful in his calling, but diligent; that it does not make him an unfaithful steward of his temporal goods, but faithful; that it does not leave him barren with respect to life and conduct in general, but makes him fruitful and rich in all good works.

Alas, O Lord, as often as we examine ourselves with regard to these matters, we must smite upon our breasts and exclaim: "God, be merciful to us sinners!"

Let us not be content therefore, we beseech Thee, merely to realize our unfaithfulness, but let us sincerely repent of it. Let us make amends and with a holier conduct in the future remove the offense which we have given in the past and as far as possible undo before men what we have done amiss.

O Lord, if Thou choose to chasten us by disgracing us, we will cheerfully bear what we have deserved. But though Thou mayest not remove the disgrace from us, nevertheless remove from us our sins. Do not become our enemy; do not disown us; do not withdraw Thy grace from us. In gratitude for this Thy love and mercy we shall henceforth watch and pray more earnestly and with a new life honor, glorify, and praise Thee.

Thou highest Comfort in every need,
Grant that neither shame nor death we heed,
That e'en then our courage may never fail us,
When at last th' Accuser shall assail us.

Lord, have mercy! Amen.

74. Cheerful Obedience.

"Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth"; thus Thy faithful servant Samuel said to Thee long ago.

Lord, we pray Thee, grant us a similar readiness to hear when Thou speakest, to submit without protest to Thy Word in all matters clearly decided by it, and when in a given case we are told, "Thus it is written," cheerfully to believe and confess it and to act in accordance with it.

Thou knowest that we are ready to submit to Thy Word when it is agreeable to us; but when it demands of us to deny ourselves, to take up our cross, and to fight with earnestness and determination, we are prone to tell ourselves that a little act of disobedience now and then is not so serious.

Create in us therefore a heart that is obedient to Thy Word in everything, so that on the Last Day Thy Word may not condemn, but acquit us.

Hear us, O Lord, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

75. Removing a Serious Offense.

O Lord God, our congregation is suffering from various and serious ailments. Regretfully we must confess with Thy prophet: "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint."

To cure one of these ailments we are gathered here at this time.

Certainly it would be folly to flee for help to any one besides Thee, Thou heavenly Physician, who art able to cure every ailment.

Therefore we pray Thee, be present with us and let us constantly be aware of Thy presence, aware of the fact that Thou hearest every word we speak and Thou observest even the hidden thoughts and motives of our heart.

Let us ever be mindful of Thy Word and learn from it that which is right, judge and be judged according to it as the infallible standard, in order that we may judge all matters justly and so that it will be pleasing to Thee, O Thou holy Judge of all mankind, and will be approved and confirmed by Thee. Let it be far from us for the sake of selfish gain to employ unjust measures and unfair standards, for that is an abomination unto Thee.

Let our decisions be prompted by the desire to honor Thy name and to further the good and welfare of our neighbor.

Above all, we pray Thee, grant grace unto every one of us to speak to one another in a brotherly, friendly, and charitable spirit. Keep us from employing harsh words, which would hurt our brother's feelings and grieve Thy Spirit dwell-

ing with us. Keep all of us from offending any weak brother. Bid our Old Adam keep silent and let the new man speak, who is created after Thee, in Thine image.

O Lord, we all have sinned and are guilty of allowing ourselves to be ensnared in various wicked things; give us a ready mind therefore to suffer with others the dire consequences of our joint unfaithfulness.

Let not our meeting together here be in vain lest in the hour of death and before Thy judgment-seat the transactions of this meeting point an accusing finger at us. Let no curse rest on us. If one or the other of us — which we ask Thee graciously to prevent — should choose to follow his own heart in preference to Thy Word and in the face of better knowledge become guilty of all manner of intrigue, let not this congregation suffer for it, but justify and cleanse it and continue to bless it, materially and spiritually, for time and for eternity. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

76. Prizing the Pure Word.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast given us Thy Word in its purity. Great is this Thy gift. In all our soul problems we can rely on its counsel. It makes us certain of our salvation.

On the other hand, one erroneous notion, one false hope, one indiscreet rebuke, is able to mislead man into despair and misbelief and ultimately to rob him of his faith and his soul's salvation. Many are the errors all about us from which Thou hast preserved us.

However, Thou hast made clear to us that, if any undervalue or even misuse the gifts flowing from Thy free grace, without our merit or worthiness, Thou wilt take Thy gifts from them and give them unto such as bring forth fruit in due season.

O Lord, grant unto all of us grace to realize what great things Thou hast done for us, with our whole heart to prize Thy pure Word, faithfully to use it, and by word and deed to uphold it before the world in order that, having entered into our midst, Thou mayest abide with us and our children unto the end of days.

Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

77. Spiritual Wisdom.

O Lord God, Thou wouldst have us, Thy children, be children in malice, but men in understanding; Thou desirest that our senses be exercised to discern both good and evil and to understand what is that good and perfect will that is acceptable to Thee.

Accordingly we have gathered here for the purpose of jointly drawing from that sole fountain of wisdom and knowledge, to search Thy holy Word. Do, then, we beseech Thee, open our eyes to behold the wonders of Thy Law. Grant us grace to weigh all matters in the balance of Thy sanctuary. Let us all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Help us finally to carry into practise that which we have learned to know as the truth and to let our light shine before men, so that they may see our good works and glorify Thee, our Father in heaven.

Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

78. Prayer for Peace.

In times of need and distress, also in times of war, we ought to thank and praise Thee, O merciful God. In the present affliction brought on by war Thy benefits have been

so manifold that only if our hearts were hardened, could we fail to thank and praise Thee.

Thou hast ever proved Thyself an impregnable wall about us and our dear ones. As a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, so Thou hast covered us with the wings of Thine almighty protection. With Thy favor Thou hast compassed us as with a shield. As a mother Thou hast pressed us to Thy bosom; Thou hast borne us as on wings of an eagle.

Lord, who are we that Thou hast favored us in preference to many millions? We are sinners who have deserved only punishment. Thou hast shown us mercy instead of sitting in judgment upon us; Thou hast not dealt with us after our sins nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

In time and in eternity we will thank and praise Thee for Thy goodness. O rouse us thoroughly that we may thank Thee unto the end of our lives, not only with words, but also with a new life, in fervent love, in firm faith, in living hope, and in humble patience.

But, O Lord, while we enjoy Thy benefits, we are mindful also of the great distress which our dear country and its inhabitants are suffering and perils threatening them. We pray Thee humbly and most fervently, soon make it manifest that Thou art the almighty God, who turnest the hearts as the rivers of water, and incline all hearts unto peace.

Lord, we would not dictate to Thee how Thou shouldst accomplish this; for, being the All-wise, Thou alone knowest the right way and the proper means to be employed. But to have compassion upon our country, quench the terrible conflagration of war, and calm its destructive waves.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus, the eternal Prince of Peace. Amen.

79. Being Separate from the World.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank Thee for redeeming us and the entire lost world and especially for choosing, calling, and gathering us out of this lost world into Thy holy Church.

Oh, what blessed people we have become in consequence of this! What is all the gold and silver in this world, what are all the treasures this earth can offer, compared with our wealth of heavenly treasures, grace, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, and the gift of Thy Holy Spirit? What are all the joys and pleasures of the world compared with the joy and peace which Thou affordest us? What is all the honor and glory of the world compared with the honor and glory of being Thy servants, Thine instruments, Thy children, destined to be crowned and to inherit an eternal kingdom?

O Lord God, help us to recognize what great things Thou hast done for us by drawing us away from the fellowship of the perishing world, and grant us grace to be separate from the world in all our life and conduct and by a truly holy conversation to shine as lights in the world.

Since the world is selfish, create within us genuine love, which seeks not its own, but the good of others, love that never fails, love that believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things. Since the world is proud and overbearing, create within us unfeigned humility, by virtue of which we regard ourselves as nothing in Thy sight and, compared with others, the chief sinners, not seeking honor, but condescending to men of low estate. Since the world seeks its happiness in the pride of life, in meat and drink, in all manner of vanity, create within us a truly heavenly mind, so that we had rather be doorkeepers in the house of our God than abide in the tents of wickedness.

Hear us, O Lord God, and bless this our meeting for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer. Amen.

80. Faith which Worketh by Love.

Lord Jesus, when we appear before Thee, we are reminded of our guilt, our unfaithfulness, our sins, also in this evening hour.

Our foremost petition this evening therefore is that Thou wouldst be gracious unto us and forgive our sins for the sake of Thy holy life and Thy bitter suffering and death, where-with Thou hast atoned for our sins, reconciled us unto Thy Father, and procured for us a righteousness that availeth forever.

But we experience it daily that only when our faith is alive and strong, are we able to fight earnestly and cheerfully against flesh, world, and the devil and to walk in a new and holy life. Therefore we beseech Thee to create and increase within us true, living faith, the faith which worketh by love. Grant us the earnest of the Spirit and seal and confirm our hearts through Him.

With great long-suffering Thou hast borne with us until now. Forsake us not, but abide with us. Complete Thy work within us and help us finally to emerge from the perilous battle of this life and to enter Thine eternal peace. Amen.

81. Divine Presence and Benediction.

Lord Jesus, we cannot adequately thank Thee for permitting us to find a new home in this distant Western world and for gathering us by Thy Word and the Holy Spirit into a congregation which knows, honors, worships, and serves Thy holy name.

But regretfully we must acknowledge that we are in constant danger of losing what Thou hast entrusted unto us.

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. The world

about us is deceitful and ever seeks to ensnare us. Satan walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

Hence we pray Thee, make Thy Word effective in us that we may grow strong and zealous to fight the good fight appointed for us and to endure unto the end. Give us open eyes, so that we may at all times know the right way, and cheerfulness to follow it.

Thou hast said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." Hence we pray Thee, graciously afford us Thy presence at this time and let our joint deliberations be accompanied with many blessings.

Graciously rule also in our homes and in our families and make them abodes of blessed peace. Rule in our city, in our State, and in our nation and look upon it with eyes of compassion.

Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

82. Bars to Church-Membership.

Lord Jesus Christ, we have gathered here to deliberate in Thy presence upon the proper attitude to those who are not to be admitted to church-fellowship, forasmuch as Thou hast said: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."

O Lord, grant us grace not to be forgetful of our own unworthiness. For, lo, everything good which we possess, which we think, desire, speak, or do is not a work of our own, but wholly a gift of Thy grace. And, alas! how often have we acted toward that which is holy in a manner altogether unbecoming! How often did we remain impenitent for days

and weeks and months! Only after a long and wonderfully patient search hast Thou found us. Yes, there may be some among us who have not allowed themselves to be found by Thee even now, whose conscience has not been purged of dead works through Thy blood. Hence we first of all smite upon our own breasts and beseech Thee, Lord Jesus, be merciful unto us sinners.

But inasmuch as Thou hast made us stewards of Thy mysteries, open our eyes, so that we may fully understand how we should properly discharge our duties as stewards. The souls of others are not benefited by our love for them; no, only if we take heed unto Thy Word and will.

Give sight unto us who are blind therefore, firm steps unto us who are lame, hearing ears unto us who are deaf, and speech unto us who are speechless and bless our deliberations that they may redound to the glory of Thy name and to the welfare and salvation of our own souls as well as of the souls of many others. Amen.

83. Preservation in Faith.

Lord God, heavenly Father, what a weighty matter is that of our salvation, and yet, how lightly do we often regard it! At all times Thou art determined to draw us unto Thyself, but how seldom we think of coming to Thee! Glorious is our goal, but how sluggish are we to strive toward it! Terrible is the danger of losing our souls, but how seldom are we terrified by it! Abundant are the means and opportunities at our disposal to save our souls, but how shamefully we neglect them! How worthless and treacherous are earthly treasures, but how eagerly we run after them! How easy is the true Christian's yoke and how light his cross, but how few are willing to take it upon themselves!

O Lord, our God, so friendly, so gracious, so good, so merciful, so patient, so long-suffering, do not tire of working in us through Thy Word and Thy Spirit; do not surrender us to our depraved mind; keep after us every day and do not remove Thy grace from us; rescue us from all temptations that threaten us and break asunder the bands of sin and unbelief that seek to enslave us; continue and perform the good work which Thou hast begun in us; at all hours make us prepared to be called home and finally take us into Thy blessed kingdom. Hear us, who alone art the Author and Finisher of all that is good, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

84. Pardon and Power over Sin.

Lord, Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with Thee. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness.

Therefore our conscience reminds us, as often as we sin, that with every sin we offend Thee, O Thou most holy God, and provoke Thee unto wrath, and we are filled with uneasiness and fear. And because we in our blindness so often mistake darkness for light and evil for good, Thou hast given us Thy holy commandments and threatenest to punish all who transgress them.

Give us therefore, we beseech Thee, hearts and minds that will fear Thy wrath and that do not act contrary to such commandments; that we may not permit ourselves to be bound by any secret fetters of sin; that we may flee from every sin as we would from a serpent and shun it as a poison that leads to death and hell; that in every temptation to sin we may remain faithful and steadfast; that we may fight earnestly against even the most infatuating sins and ultimately gain the victory.

But inasmuch as we can triumph over sin only after it has been forgiven and we are upheld by Thy grace, we pray Thee for the sake of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, remember not the sins of our youth nor our many other transgressions. Cleanse Thou us from secret faults; for, O Lord, who can understand his errors?

Finally take us out of this world of temptation and bring us to that place where there is no sin and no danger of sinning, where we shall awake in Thy likeness and walk in holiness and blessedness forever.

Hear us for the sake of Thy grace and truth. Amen.

85. Love in Return for Love.

God, how great is the love with which Thou hast loved us from eternity and which Thou hast manifested toward us unto this hour!

Thou hast created us, given us body and soul, and daily and richly Thou suppliest all our wants. Thou hast preserved us from harm, rescued us from danger, and sustained us until now. Yea, more; because we are sinners, Thou didst redeem us through Thy Son from death and hell; in Holy Baptism Thou hast adopted us as Thy children; Thou hast given us Thy pure saving Word; Thy Holy Spirit constantly operates within our souls; in the Holy Supper Thou satisfiest our hungry and thirsty souls with the body and blood of Thy Son, our blessed Redeemer; as often as we approach Thee in repentance and faith, Thou richly and daily forgivest our sins; Thou hearest our humble prayers and supplications. But, oh, who can number all Thy deeds of love and grace toward us?

O Lord, our God, grant us grace to say with Thine apostle: "We love Him because He first loved us," and to act in accordance therewith.

Pour Thy love into our hearts that out of love to Thee we may hate sin and earnestly strive against it; out of love to Thee despise all things temporal and seek first Thy kingdom; out of love to Thee never grow weary of hearing and searching Thy Word; out of love to Thee gladly and diligently pray to Thee; out of love to Thee strive after holiness of heart and conduct.

Fill us with true sorrow over the fact that we love Thee so little or not at all; and having kindled and increased Thy love within us, preserve it within us and by a blessed departure take us finally into perfect and everlasting fellowship with Thy love.

Hear us for the sake of Thy dear Son, our Savior. Amen.

86. The Pearl of Great Price.

Lord Jesus, in Thy holy Word Thou sayest to us: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." These Thy words are a mirror held before our eyes in which we may behold whether we are truly Thine, chosen from among the world, or whether we still belong to the world, which has no part in Thee.

But, alas! where is our heart? We cannot deny that it is largely taken up with earthly treasures, which we either have or strive to gain or fear to lose.

Our heart attached to earthly treasures!

O dear Lord, help us vividly to realize the worthlessness of a treasure which thieves can dig for and steal, which moths and rust can corrupt, which offers to the soul not rest, but unrest, and which will finally perish with the world and vanish as vapor. Help us instead to value the great treasure of Thy Word and grace, a treasure which no creature can take from us,

a treasure which affords rest, peace, and true happiness and which will remain in death and unto all eternity.

Thou art exceedingly eager to give us this eternal treasure. Already at our baptism Thou didst impart it unto us, and Thou offerest it unto us anew every time we read, hear, meditate upon, and discuss Thy Word and whenever we appear at Thy Holy Supper. O guard us against contempt of Thy grace; grant that we may open wide unto Thee our hearts, happy to receive Thee as our Guest and to let Thee dwell within us unto our end.

Finally let us depart in peace and come into full possession of that treasure for which our heart has been longing here; let eternal joy and blessedness be our lot. Amen.

87. God's Rescuing Hand in Times of Peril.

Lord Jesus, through Thy servant Paul Thou hast told us in advance: "The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." Thou Thyself hast told us that in the latter days the love of many of Thy followers will grow cold and that upon Thy return Thou wilt find no faith on earth.

Such predictions we see fulfilled before our eyes.

Oh, may we not experience in our own hearts and lives the peril and the corruption of these terrible latter times! But we cannot deny that our faith is weak, like a flickering candle in a storm; our love is all but extinguished, like a spark in a shower of rain. Every moment, wherever we may be, we are in danger of being drawn into the torrent of universal destruction and of thus losing that for which we labored, yea, going down into perdition.

We pray Thee, Lord Jesus, consider our peril and helplessness and have mercy upon us. Reach out to us poor sinners Thy gracious hand lest we perish and carry us through the deluge of these wicked times unto the haven of eternal safety and blessedness. Hear us, Lord, for Thy name's sake. Amen.

88. Loving God Above All.

Lord Jesus, in Thy holy Word Thou sayest: "He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than Me is not worthy of Me." And again: "If any man come to Me and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

Accordingly Thou desirest that we love Thee more than all those who are dearest to us here on earth. We should be willing to rouse the enmity of the whole world rather than do anything against Thy will; we should part with everything else rather than lose Thee; Thou oughtest to be our highest treasure in heaven and earth, for time and for eternity. Otherwise we are not worthy of Thee, not worthy to be Thy disciples. In other words, Thou art not content to share our affections with others; Thou demandest our whole heart.

Truly, Thou art worthy of such a sacrifice. Not only art Thou our God, He who supplies all our needs; Thou art also our Savior. To prefer Thee to others means to lose sin and gain righteousness, to lose Thy Father's displeasure and gain His grace, to lose that which is only temporary and worthless and to gain that which is eternal and of genuine worth, to escape death and damnation and to inherit life and salvation.

Give us all a heart therefore that will say with Thy servant Asaph: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there

is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and My heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my heart and my Portion forever." Despite temptations and trials preserve unto us such a mind unto our end. Before Thy throne, in yonder life, we shall sing a new song, sung not to our own nor any creature's glory, but alone to Thy glory, from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

89. Preparedness for Judgment Day.

Lord Jesus, unto Thy disciples, long ago, Thou spakest the solemn words: "Watch ye therefore and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man."

Eighteen [now nineteen] centuries have elapsed since then, and constantly new signs are appearing, proclaiming with ever-increasing emphasis that the day of Thine appearance and glory is drawing nigh.

Oh, let Thy Holy Spirit be operative within us, so that we may heed Thine admonitions and warnings, watch and pray, be accounted worthy to escape the Judgment to come, and, when Thou wilt come in Thy glory, be placed at Thy right hand as Thine own.

If any among us still slumber in sin, awaken them that they may be terrified by the awful thought of being rejected by Thee and turn to Thee with their whole heart.

If any of us have gone back from light into the former darkness, from life into death, from liberty into bondage, from strength into weakness, from fervent love into indifference, restore them and reinstate them in the blessed fellowship of Thy grace.

If any of us are at present being tempted again to leave

Thee, strengthen them that they may fight a good fight and triumph over such temptation.

Preserve those of us who are faithfully serving Thee that they may remain steadfast unto the end in faith, love, hope, and patience.

Yes, help us all to come to Thee and continue with Thee that at Thine appearing we may have joy and not be put to shame. Amen.

90. Repentance and Pardon.

Lord Jesus, also to every one of us Thine accusing words apply: "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities." By Thy Holy Spirit open our eyes to see the multitude and the greatness of our sins and iniquities because of which Thou wast scourged, bound, mocked, buffeted, spit upon, crucified, and put to death; soften our hearts that we may be filled with regret and sorrow over our sins.

Thou hast also said: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake and will not remember thy sins." Let this consoling truth sink deep into our hearts that in true faith we may lay hold of Thy righteousness, which alone avails before Thy Father, draw comfort and joy from Thy grace, and thank Thee for it, not only with words, but also with a new life of love toward Thee.

Hear us, Lord Jesus, for the sake of Thy bitter suffering and death. Amen.

91. New Year.

Lord, our God, all-knowing and all-wise, whatever in time Thou bringest to pass Thou hast resolved upon already in eternity. Throughout our lives Thou hast been very merciful to us. Thou hast let us hear and learn Thy Word, by means

of it hast brought us to the knowledge of our sins and of Thy grace, and through Thy Holy Spirit hast kindled and preserved within us faith in Jesus Christ, Thine only Son, our Savior. It is certain therefore that already from eternity Thou hast decreed to bestow Thy grace upon us and resolved to make us Thy children.

Thanks be unto Thee in time and eternity!

But, O Lord, from Thy holy Word we learn that, while we ourselves can contribute nothing toward our salvation, — all glory belongs to Thee alone, — we can indeed do much to lose it. Therefore we pray Thee, take us altogether into Thy gracious care; let us be unto Thee as clay in the potter's hands; guard us against the desires of our wicked flesh and blood, against the enticements of the blind world, and against the treacherous assaults of the devil. Help us to pass safely through all the dangers threatening our souls and grant that during this new year we may either depart this life in peace, or if we live through it, grant that the end of the year may find us still enjoying Thy grace.

Pour out Thy blessings upon this first meeting of the new year for the sake of Jesus Christ, our precious Redeemer and Savior. Amen.

92. "Abide with Us."

Lord Jesus, Thou hast seen fit to let us be born at a time when even within Christendom Thy saving Word is either rejected altogether or adulterated to a great extent, or when truth is at least mixed with error; at a time when only a very few places witness the preaching and teaching of Thy Word in its purity, without either addition or curtailment.

Oh, how can we adequately thank Thee for permitting

the bright rays of Thy pure Word to shine forth among us in these last sad times! Who are we, O Lord, that Thou shouldst have visited us thus so graciously?

Preserve us from indifference toward Thy grace and open contempt of it lest Thou be compelled to take Thy vineyard from us and let it out to other husbandmen, who will bring Thee its fruits in due season.

As Thou didst comply with the request of those two disciples whose faith had become so very weak: "Lord, abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent," even so abide with us in this evening hour of Thy Church and let the day dawn soon when Thou wilt call home Thine own from earthly labors to the heavenly rest, from temporal warfare to eternal triumph.

Grant this, O Lord Jesus, for the sake of Thy grace and truth. Amen.

93. Love and Unity.

Faithful God and Father, Thou Thyself sayest in Thy holy Word: —

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is
For brethren to dwell together in unity!
It is like the precious ointment upon the head
That ran down upon the beard,
Even Aaron's beard;
That went down to the skirt of his garments;
As the dew of Hermon
That descended upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the Lord commanded the blessing,
Even life forevermore."

With these words Thou testifiest how good and pleasant it is when Thy children are bound together by the bond of love and unity; that such unity gives forth sweet odor as of precious ointment; that by means of it the united hearts are themselves refreshed, even as the dew of heaven refreshes the barren desert

of this world; that by means of it opportunity is given to Thee to pour out blessings and life.

Forgive us, then, O Lord, if hitherto we have disturbed this unity among ourselves, or at least did not foster it as we should have done. Remove all obstacles, both within and without, and pour out upon us the Spirit of peace and love, so that a unity which is pleasing to Thee may dwell among us, may shame the dissentious world, and open our hearts to admit Thy blessings. Grant us now an hour of peaceful exchange of ideas for the sake of Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, our eternal Prince of Peace. Amen.

94. Christ Our Only Hope.

Lord Jesus, Thou sayest: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in and shall not be able." These words are not a command to work out our salvation with our own reason and strength, but rather to despair of our own worthiness, as well as of all that we desire and are able to do and to trust for our salvation solely in Thy grace. Thou alone hast atoned for our sins, Thou alone hast procured for us righteousness and everlasting life. And those alone are Thy true disciples, Thy true Church, who give Thee all glory for their salvation.

Grant, we beseech Thee, that Thy life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, and Thy sweet and gracious Gospel, which tells of those Thy marvelous deeds in behalf of us sinners, may be our sole refuge in all our anguish because of sin and our only consolation in life and death.

Yea, help us to cling to that Gospel until we shall finally behold Thee, our Savior, in Thy glory, and as Thy redeemed rejoice with Thee forever and ever. Amen.

95. Genuine Brotherliness.

Lord Jesus, Thou recognizest only him as Thine own who is a living member of Thy spiritual body, of which Thou art the Head; and whomsoever Thou in Thy grace hast made to be such a member, such a one is to let himself be molded into an instrument for service that Thy whole body be edified.

We pray Thee therefore, let none of us remain in spiritual death, but awaken every one to be a living member that he may be grafted into Thy spiritual body as a living member. And furnish with Thy gifts those whom Thou hast made living members of Thy body that one may serve the other in brotherly love; that one may instruct, and be instructed of, the other; that one may correct, and be corrected of, the other; that one may admonish, and be admonished of, the other; that one may console, and be consoled by, the other, — that thus we may be fitly framed together and grow unto a holy temple in Thee, for a habitation of God through the Spirit.

O Lord, long enough we have with a sinful zeal served ourselves, our flesh, the vain world, and Satan; grant us grace to be more zealous and more faithful in Thy service, that through us Thy thrice holy name, maligned by the enemies of Thy Word, may be honored and that some day we may enjoy the fulfilment of Thy promise: "Where I am, there shall also My servant be. If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." Amen.

96. Preservation from Deliberate Sin.

God, our Father, although all men have sinned against Thee, Thou hast so loved them from eternity that Thou didst not spare Thine only-begotten Son, but didst deliver Him up into death for all, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Thy grace and mercy are in

the heavens, and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Even the greatest sinner is not rejected by Thee if he comes to Thee with tears of contrition.

But Thou art not only gracious and merciful; Thou art also holy and righteous. "The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight; Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." He that permits sin to rule over him cannot be at peace with Thee. Thou hearest not the prayers of deliberate sinners, but sayest unto them: "When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear." Whoever trifles with Thy grace, him Thou rewardest with wrath and displeasure.

O Lord, preserve us therefore, from using Thy revealed grace and love as an occasion for carnal security, but rather take refuge in it with a contrite heart and in true faith, walk the narrow way according to Thy Word, earnestly oppose our wicked heart and its sinful desires, remain steadfast in the faith which overcometh the world, and, relying upon Thy grace in Christ, finally depart in peace. Amen.

97. Gifts of the Spirit.

Lord Jesus, unto Thee the promise has been made: "I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth." Thou shalt possess the kingdoms of the world and reign throughout the earth.

And, lo! it has come to pass. Thou didst send out Thy twelve holy messengers to preach the Gospel unto every creature, to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins in Thy name; and everywhere men have been awakened out of the sleep of death, through faith have become subjects of Thy

holy and blessed kingdom, and acknowledge with joy that Thou art the Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Thy voice has penetrated also to our ears and hearts and has called us together here to serve Thee as Thy people.

As Thy people and heritage bless us now with the gifts of Thy Holy Spirit. Grant unto us a strong faith, fervent love, a living hope, cheerful confession, genuine understanding, sane judgment, holy zeal, and righteous deeds.

Give us men who are ensamples to the flock, champions in the fight, and leaders in the right path, who make up the hedge and stand in the gap, whom we weaker ones may imitate, until finally we shall all come in the unity of knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man in Thee.

Unto Thy name be praise and honor here in the congregation and yonder in the chorus of all Thine elect, world without end. Amen.

98. Enlightenment and Aid.

Lord, our God, inspired by Thy Holy Spirit, Thy holy apostle admonishes us: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

Thou art not content to have us seek merely the salvation of our own soul; it is Thy desire that we adorn Thy saving Word and Thy Kingdom of Grace with such things as are lovely and of good report.

For that reason we have gathered here this evening to deliberate upon a work that is lovely and of good report.

Since, however, we know not how to proceed in the matter,

we ask Thee to enlighten us; since we lack ability, we ask Thee for Thy help.

Be present therefore in our meeting and direct us according to Thy will. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

99. Our Many Shortcomings.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast done great things among us whereof we can and should be glad. However, if we measure ourselves according to Thy standard of a true Christian congregation, we blush with shame.

Thy true congregations are to be rich in all things, in doctrine and understanding, that they may not come short in any gift. But how limited is our understanding, and how few of us are ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us!

Thy true congregations are to be strong in faith; but how frail is the faith of most of us!

Thy true congregations are to be known as a communion of saints by the fact that they love one another fervently; but how sorely is true love often lacking among us!

Thy true congregation is to harbor no one in its midst who bears the name of brother, yet lives as an unbeliever and a servant of sin. But, alas! how many offenses occur among us daily! Great is the number of past offenses in our midst, which threaten ultimately to move our congregation's very foundation!

What a sad spectacle is presented by our youth! How negligent many of us are in searching the Scriptures! How sluggish many of us are in our family worship! How many of us neglect brotherly admonition, at the same time complaining of our brothers, even slandering them!

How many are members in name only, totally unconcerned about the congregation's weal or woe! How many show the earmarks of lukewarmness, yea, of inward falling away in word and deed!

O Lord, enter not into judgment with us, Thy poor sinful servants, but cleanse Thy sanctuary among us.

To that end bless also this our meeting for the sake of Thy love. Amen.

100. Awaking from Self-Deception.

Lord God, heavenly Father, Thou hast done everything that every one may be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth, be preserved from fatal error, and finally inherit eternal life. To that end Thou didst not only send Thy dear Son into the world, giving Him unto death for all men and thus reconciling all men unto Thyself; Thou hast furthermore put Thy Word, the Bible, into our hands, that we may read it; Thou hast instituted the office of the holy ministry that Thy gracious will may be proclaimed unto us continually.

But, alas! how many, despite such efforts on Thy part for the salvation of men, remain in their natural blindness and never learn what belongs unto their peace! Though they taste it, they see it not; though they hear it, they understand it not. Yea, many, after Thou hast enlightened them, become blind again; they return to the way of error though they refuse to acknowledge it; though lying on their backs, they imagine themselves standing upright; in their folly they suppose themselves wise; they think themselves rich and in need of nothing, not knowing that they are poor and miserable and blind and naked; being dead, they suppose themselves alive; they are Thine enemies though they call themselves Thy friends; they consider themselves the masters of sin and are its slaves!

O Lord, we pray Thee, deal with us as Thou wilt; send us what seems good to Thee; only let us not become the victims of self-deception, blindness, and hardening of heart. Keep us under the influence of Thy Holy Spirit. Graciously show us the errors and perils into which we have fallen and bring us back to what is right. If penalty and pain must follow upon sin, let us suffer here, but spare us yonder.

Yea, help us, Lord, to finish the race and keep the faith unto the end that some day Thou mayest deliver us out of this life of woe and take us into Thy heavenly paradise. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

101. Time of Epidemic.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank Thee that at a time when so many have quickly and suddenly been carried away by a deadly epidemic, Thou hast preserved us thus far and grantest us grace to meet here to-day.

We are not worthy of the least of all the mercy and all the truth which Thou hast shown unto us.

Help us to devote what remains of our day of grace, not to ourselves, but to Thee.

To that end give us Thy Holy Spirit and through Him strengthen our faith and kindle within us fervent love, thereby making us rich in good works.

To that end bless also our present deliberations. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

102. Spiritual Understanding.

God, it is Thy will that Thine own should not forever remain children in understanding, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, but that we should strive

to come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and by reason of use have our senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

But Thou knowest how difficult it is for us to distinguish between good and evil, especially when proper understanding is at variance with the inclinations of our flesh and blood.

We pray Thee therefore not only to kindle within us the light of proper understanding, but also to curb the ungodly leanings of our heart, so that we may cheerfully follow the light that has risen unto us.

Grant that the strong among us may support the weak and not despise or offend them; that, on the other hand, the weak may not judge the strong or be offended by them. Grant us grace to be all of one heart and one mind in all matters revealed in Thy Word, so that we may be filled with a fervent desire not only to be and remain in Thy grace, but also to walk in it above criticism and reproach, until, being endowed with that perfect light, we shall behold Thee face to face. Grant this for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our glorious Savior. Amen.

103. Separate from the World.

Lord Jesus, it is Thy will that Thy followers be not conformed to this world, be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. They should rather reprove them and walk as lights, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. Yea, Thou sayest to Thy followers: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Separate us therefore from the world, which despises Thee,

first of all through true repentance and a genuine change of heart.

Thereafter grant us grace to separate ourselves from it also outwardly, to avoid its friendship and intimate fellowship, and to make it feel ashamed of itself when it sees our truly godly conduct.

Finally grant that on the Last Day we may not be numbered with the tares, but with the pure wheat and be gathered into Thy heavenly garner.

Help us through Thy suffering and death and for the sake of Thine everlasting grace. Amen.

104. Living as God's People.

Faithful God and Father, we humbly thank and praise Thee for Thine abundant goodness and grace in temporal as well as spiritual matters which despite our unworthiness Thou hast shown unto us.

We realize full well that Thou alone canst help us henceforth and that, except Thou help us, we are lost.

Therefore continue to show us Thy grace and goodness.

Let the gracious fountain of Thy Word and Thy Sacraments continue to flow freely, free from every obstruction or adulteration.

To the end that sinners may be converted and rescued, continue to endow us with Thy Holy Spirit. Through Him grant understanding to the ignorant, concern about their salvation to the secure, humility to the self-righteous, certainty to the wavering, comfort to the sorrowful, strength to the weak, peace to those assailed by temptations, and a peaceful departure to the dying.

Make of our homes temples in which Thou art served day and night, in which husband and wife dwell together in

love and faithfulness, in which parents rear their children in Thy fear, in which masters and mistresses govern their help in a godly manner, and in which our children and our household may walk in true obedience according to the Fourth Commandment.

Make of our schools nurseries for church and heaven.

Make of our sick-beds scenes of triumph over world, cross, and death.

Draw us ever closer together through unity of faith, genuine brotherly love, and the common battle against the common foe.

Let us not stand still lest we go backward, but help us grow up in all things into Him who is our Head, even Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord.

Direct at this time our heart, understanding, tongue, and mouth that our gathering may result in eternal blessings.

Hear us for the sake of Thy promise. Amen.

105. Our Frailties Corrected.

Lord God, heavenly Father, through Thy goodness and grace we have been brought together in this our new fatherland and induced to gather for service to Thee and for the joint hearing and confession of Thy holy Word. Thanks and praise be unto Thee for all the blessings, both bodily and spiritual, both temporal and eternal, which Thou hast granted us and which Thou still dost grant us daily through such fellowship.

We know, however, that outward fellowship, without inward fellowship in faith and love, is useless.

Hence we pray Thee that, having united us in body, Thou wouldst unite us also in spirit.

By true repentance rid us of all delight in sin, of all love

for the world, of all self-wrought consolation, of all self-righteousness, of all trust in our own strength, and fill us all with Thy Spirit, with the Spirit of faith, of love, of hope, of comfort, and of strength, that in this divided, wrangling, peaceless world we may be one, as Thou art one with Thy Son, one heart and soul with Thee.

Possibly Thou wilt find in our midst some who have the name that they live, but in reality are dead; if so, restore them to life.

Possibly Thou wilt find in our midst some who have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof; let godliness become to them something real.

Without a doubt Thou beholdest in us many more shortcomings than we ourselves can see and perils to which our souls are exposed, of which we are not in the least aware. O Thou faithful Keeper of Israel, be gracious unto us, come to our rescue, heal our ailments, and help us to pass safely through all perils.

Show Thy grace and favor unto us especially at this time and make Thy face shine upon us. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

106. Unity of the Spirit.

Lord God, heavenly Father, through Thy holy apostle Thou addresseth to all Christians and Christian congregations this admonition: "Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

It is not enough that we cautiously guard against destroying the unity produced by Thy Spirit; not only should we rejoice over it; we should also eagerly and diligently strive to preserve it and watch over it as over a precious jewel.

Thou hast shown us the means whereby alone true spir-

itual unity may be preserved, namely, the bond of peace, that we avoid everything in word and deed that might cause strife and do everything we can to promote peace.

Thou addest further weight to Thy plea for unity by reminding us that we are all one body in Christ and called in one hope of our calling by one Spirit, that we have one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father, who is above us all and through us all and in us all.

O Lord God, heavenly Father, grant us grace to heed this Thy admonition; with the power of Thy grace overcome our natural contentious heart. Let us prize peace above having our own way, since peace is well-pleasing unto Thee, but our will enmity against Thee.

Thou hast promised: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth; blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." O let that promise compel our hearts to deny ourselves lest on the Last Day we be rejected as those who merely cried, "Lord, Lord!" and grant that as children of peace we may be received into the mansions of everlasting peace. Amen.

107. Godly Zeal.

Lord Jesus, Thou didst display great zeal for Thy Father's house and honor. In Thee were fulfilled the prophet's words: "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." It is Thy will that all who profess Thy name imitate Thy zeal. Thou hatest all lukewarmness. Yea, Thou hast said: "I would Thou wert cold or hot. So, then, because Thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

O Lord, what shall we say? Thou alone art able to kindle within us such zeal for Thy Word and for the glory of Thy holy name.

We pray Thee therefore, rouse us from slumber and death and kindle within our hearts the flame of a new life of godliness.

Remove from us also all strange fires, fires which Thou hast not kindled, all false, carnal zeal, which pretends to seek Thine honor, but in reality seeks its own honor, its own pleasure, and its own gain.

Above all we pray Thee, preserve us from becoming such as would deserve to hear the dreadful words: "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully!" Give us a mind that seeks first the kingdom of God; a mind that values the gold of Thy truth above the gold of this earth; a mind that is offended more by the sin and error of the enemies of Thy Word than by their insults and enmity directed against us.

Yea, help us to subject ourselves wholly to Thee, with our understanding, our will, and our desires, and let us finally come to Thee and abide with Thee forever. Amen.

108. Love for the Lost.

Lord Jesus, of Thyself Thou hast said: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Thou excludest no one from Thy grace, forasmuch as we are all lost and come short of the glory of God, having no righteousness of our own, no hope, no God, and no salvation. Thy Word informs us: "Thou hast received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also." Even though one who has come unto Thee again become rebellious, though he expel from his heart Thy Spirit of grace, soil anew the garment of Thy righteousness, break the covenant of grace that had been established with Thee, become disloyal to Thee, and return to the company of Thine enemies and to the service of the devil, even then Thou holdest out to him the gifts of Thy grace — life, rescue, sal-

vation. Oh, how gracious Thou art, what a Friend, what a good Shepherd!

A similar concern for the lost should fill the hearts of Thy disciples, for they are to be minded as Thou wast in the days of Thy flesh. We pray Thee therefore, fill our hearts with Thy searching love for sinners.

Above all we pray Thee, knock at the hearts of the lost and the rebellious among us and let them not rest until they find perfect rest in Thee; keep them from blindness and hardening of the heart; convert their hearts of stone, according to the promise of Thy prophet, into hearts of flesh, hearts which respond to Thy gracious efforts and again yield themselves completely unto Thee; hearts which recognize their serious error and repent without hypocrisy, — that they together with us may finally be rescued and saved; all this to the end that Thou mayest be honored and Thy grace be exalted unto all eternity. Amen.

109. Contrition — Pardon — Restoration.

Lord Jesus, we are living at a time when all Thy prophecies concerning the woes of the latter days are being fulfilled. Even among those who are baptized and call themselves Christians there are scoffers; thousands have fallen from the faith and grown cold in their love; vanity, worldliness, and greed, disobedience and rebellion against all human and divine authority, like a great deluge, have almost overwhelmed Christendom.

And, alas! not only is the world about us crumbling into ruins, the germ of decay has penetrated our own congregation.

Indeed, Thou wouldst be fully justified to give us a bill of divorcement and to renounce us as Thy congregation, being ashamed to own us.

What is to be done?

We can do no more than in shame and regret acknowledge our misery and, trusting Thy promise made to contrite sinners, pray Thee to help us nevertheless.

Do Thou fill with Thy fear parents and children, teachers and hearers, old and young.

Take not Thy pure Word from us, but preserve it unto us; let it be preached ever more earnestly and give power unto it, so that it will penetrate the hearts.

Unless Thy Word affords the help we need, we are helpless indeed.

From Thy Word let us also learn wisdom and find in it the proper means to heal all our spiritually sick, to raise all those who are spiritually dead, to strengthen all those whose faith is weak, and to bring back all the erring.

Give unto us earnestness and zeal to oppose sin, but also untiring love toward sinners.

Above all give heed to each individual soul, seek each one, and bring back all that have strayed away.

Bless also our present meeting for Thine own sake. Amen.

110. God's Repeated Help.

Lord Jesus, more than once our congregation has been on the verge of ruin; more than once has it seemed as though its end had come, as though the bond of faith and love would be rent asunder, as though the fire of discord would consume it and Satan would triumph over it.

But again and again it became evident that Thou wast present in the ship with us. Thou commandedst the storm and the waves, and, behold, there was a great calm; upon the days of unrest followed a refreshing season of harmony and love more fervent than ever.

Reveal unto us also at this time that Thou art present

with us in our bark; unite us in Thy holy Word; grant grace unto us to come unto the unity of the knowledge of Thy truth, that we may triumph over all the wicked schemes of Satan against us.

Thou hast made of us a city set on a high hill, which has shown the way unto many. Let not our light become extinguished, but let it ever increase in brightness in these last sad and terrible times.

To that end pour out Thy Holy Spirit upon all of us, the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, of grace and prayer, of sanctification and the fear of God. Amen.

111. Spiritual Priesthood.

Blessed art Thou, Lord Jesus Christ, Thou eternal High Priest; for after we had fallen into sin and our sins had separated us from God, Thy Father, Thou not only madest atonement for our sins, but didst also exalt us to be priests with Thee, who, attired in the robe of Thy righteousness, with faith in our hearts, may boldly approach to the throne of Thy Father. How can we ever adequately thank Thee for raising us out of our lowliness, for sanctifying us sinners, for glorifying us who were so miserable? Indeed, what is the world with all its treasures compared with what Thou hast procured for and presented to us, Thy believers? What is semblance compared with reality, that which is earthly compared with that which is heavenly, that which is temporal compared with that which is eternal, that which is vain and transitory compared with divine and eternal glory and honor?

But, lo, Lord Jesus, the fact that Thou hast thus glorified Thy followers is seized upon by Satan constantly as an occasion to discourage them in serving Thee.

Help us therefore, we beseech Thee, to realize what we

possess by having Thee, so that we may cheerfully serve Thee in spirit and in faith despite all resistance of the flesh, cheerfully confess Thee before the world despite the disgrace involved, cheerfully follow Thee through every distress, cheerfully approach even death despite all the horrors of sin and hell, and thus finally enter in triumph that place where the tears of Thine own will bud and grow forth in golden ears of eternal joy, and the drop of their languishing here will be converted into a heaving ocean of never-ending bliss.

To that end bless also our present gathering in Thy name, O Jesus. Amen.

112. After a Fire.

Faithful God and Father, not many days past we were gathered before Thee with joyful hearts to dedicate unto Thee a new sanctuary; and, alas! to-day we appear before Thee with humbled souls, lamenting the loss of another house of worship, which was dedicated to Thy service many years ago, but which hungry flames have now converted into a heap of ashes and ruins.

O God, the enemy, we know, has done that, who does not want Thy Word to be taught, lest many hear it and be saved. But we also know that without Thy permission not even a sparrow falls to the ground or a hair from our head. "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" Also this misfortune was sent by Thee; it is a chastening rod in Thy fatherly hand.

But it is impossible that Thou shouldst seek our hurt. Also in this matter Thou seekest our welfare. Though Satan thought evil against us, Thou meantest it unto good.

While we are yet in this world, we cannot comprehend Thy purposes at all times. But this much we know from Thy

Word, that by means of this conflagration Thou desirest to remind us of our sins against Thy Word and of our unworthiness to enjoy it in peace and to humble us, but not to drive us to despair. The destructive flames which have taken their toll are to cause the fire of our faith and love to be kindled anew and to grow into bright flames.

Let, we beseech Thee, Satan's counsel come to naught. Let not this fire rob even one soul of Thy Word. Let it not cause our little flock to be scattered. Let it not put an end to, or even hamper, Thy gracious work in our city. Let it not give our enemies occasion for rejoicing, for thus disgrace would be heaped upon Thy name.

Thou hast humbled us; exalt us again. Thou hast smitten us; heal us again. Thou hast saddened us; cause us again to rejoice.

Counsel us to do what is right and proper. To that end bless our present deliberations for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

113. Time of War.

Lord Jesus, at a time when the great kingdoms of this world are engaged in bloody conflict and Thy Church is being sorely pressed in other parts of the world, Thou hast afforded us a precious place of refuge, where we may enjoy freedom and rest, a quiet Zoar, a secure Pella.

With our whole heart we give Thee thanks for Thy loving-kindness.

Thou knowest, however, that without Thy grace we cannot truly use Thy benefits for our welfare.

We therefore pray Thee, pour out upon us through Thy Word Thy Holy Spirit in great abundance that every one may carefully guard his soul, that every one may know the

things which belong unto his peace and the time of our visitation, and work out his salvation with great earnestness and with fear and trembling.

Let Thy pure Word and Thy unadulterated Sacraments be our most-prized possession, Thy grace our highest good, heaven our constant goal, and the crown of everlasting life the prize for which we contend.

To Thee we commit all we have; our body and soul, all our thoughts, words, and deeds, our life and death, we entrust to Thy gracious government. Amen.

114. Prayer for Peace.

Lord God, heavenly Father, once more we have gathered here to-day to deliberate upon the needs of our dear congregation.

But how can we do so without being reminded of the universal distress of our dear country?

Through Thy holy prophet Thou hast commanded Thy people: "Seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives and pray unto the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace."

Not only are we to pray, but to pray without ceasing, to continue in prayer and not to grow weary.

Especially dost Thou promise the more gloriously to hear our prayer if we come before Thee jointly and in unity.

Have compassion upon our country.

Consider the millions of souls dwelling within its borders that have all been purchased with the precious blood of Thy dear Son and reconciled unto Thee.

Consider the thousands of souls that have accepted Thy dear Son and become Thy children, who constantly cry to Thee in the name of Jesus.

Consider Thy dear Church in this country, unto which Thou hast daily added more laborers for the great day of harvest.

Consider the millions of poor children who cannot yet distinguish between right and wrong.

Consider the glee of the wicked Foe when he is permitted to devour souls in vast numbers.

Consider Thine honor, the honor of Thy grace, mercy, patience, and long-suffering, and grant, O grant, that we may soon enjoy peace.

For such favors we will bring Thee the sacrifices of thanks and praise, brought by joyful lips and shown in a new life led by us; and hereafter we will praise Thee with glorified tongues forevermore. Amen. In Jesus' name. Amen.

115. Taking Advantage of God's Long-Suffering.

Gracious God and Father, in these times of distress we are assembling once more to-day in quietness and undisturbed to deliberate upon our needs.

What great things it was necessary for Thee to do to make it possible for us to carry on Thy work unto this hour unhindered by others! How intently didst Thou have to watch over us, to defend us, to foil the assaults of the wicked, to guide our hearts, to hold up our hands! Who are we, Lord, that Thou hast thus remembered us and wast so lovingly concerned about us? Indeed, we had deserved during these times of confusion to be forsaken by Thee and severely to be chastened, to be dealt with and destroyed as Admah and Zeboim.

But for Christ's sake, whose name we confess, Thou hast permitted mercy to take the place of justice. Let us not remain unappreciative and unthankful toward Thy great love, goodness, patience, long-suffering, friendliness, grace, and mercy.

Make us the more faithful in taking advantage of the extension of grace offered us and help us to give ourselves unto Thee with body, soul, heart, mind, feelings, and all powers, to live alone unto Thee, to remain steadfast in the faith which clings to Thy grace, to confess Thy truth, and to love our brethren and all our fellow-redeemed.

Bless also our present meeting for the sake of Thine everlasting faithfulness. Amen.

116. Gratitude and Consecration.

Eternal and living God, in these latter days, when so many think in their hearts and declare with their mouths, "There is no God," Thou hast enlightened the eyes of our understanding and awakened our hearts through Thy Word not only to know Thee, the true, eternal and living God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, the Redeemer of all sinners, and the sole Comforter of those in trouble, and to believe in Thee, but also to unite into a congregation, which serves Thee and confesses Thy name by word and deed. Indeed, Thou hast done very great things among us.

Help us now also adequately to thank Thee with heart, mouth, and hands for the great mercy with which Thou hast visited us.

As Thou hast been gracious to us in greater measure than to others, grant that we may therefore excel others in faithfully serving Thee.

Convert those among us — if there should be such — who hear and confess Thy Word only outwardly, but have not been fully awakened by it, who have not been brought to true repentance, in whose hearts that faith has not been kindled which purifies them.

Renew by true repentance and restore those among us —

if there be such — who at one time were truly converted, but later fell away.

Give unto the wavering a firm heart, strengthen the weak, fill the indifferent with holy zeal, preserve us all from sin, doubt, misbelief, and unbelief, grant us strength and victory in every conflict, consolation in every distress, prosper all we do, and finally give us a blessed end and let us enter Thine eternal joy; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

117. Time of Epidemic.

Almighty, eternal God, Thou Lord of life and death, we thank Thee that in these evil times Thou hast graciously visited us. Indeed, Thou art wielding over us the stern rod of a pestilence that has, alas! taken many a dear brother and sister out of our midst; but even so Thou hast our welfare at heart.

Through the present epidemic Thou remindest us that we must die, not to frighten us and to drive us to despair, but in order that we may divorce ourselves from this perilous world, be awakened from every sinful slumber into which we may fall, set our house in order, acknowledge our sins, and, above all, through firm faith take refuge in Thy dear Son, our only Savior and Conqueror of death.

Grant, we beseech Thee, that Thy call to repent and to prepare for death may be spurned by none of us, but that we may all take refuge in Jesus Christ, cling to Him day and night, and finally depart in peace.

Thou wouldst not have us abandon Thy work at a time like this, but to work while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work.

O therefore grant us grace in this evening hour, as at the portals of eternity, to deliberate in Thy fear upon those things

that are beneficial to Thy dear children. To that end direct our understanding and our minds and let our efforts be crowned with success according to Thy gracious will and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

118. Consecration.

Lord Jesus, by Thy Spirit Thou didst move Thy holy apostle to say unto Thy Christians: "My beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

Inscribe into our hearts this warning of Thy faithful servant.

Keep us from straying and wandering either to the right or to the left; help us to stand firm and immovable.

Keep us from stagnation; help us rather to increase in zeal, in loyalty, in diligence, in fervor in doing Thy work.

We are aware of Thy goodness, grace, and mercy. But, alas! our depraved flesh and blood is so prone to trifle with Thy goodness; and just because of Thy goodness, sad to say, we are unwilling by means of true repentance to purify our conscience of dead works, and so easily we therefore cease to pray fervently, to fight, to deny ourselves, to watch, and to seek those things which are above, where Thou art.

Therefore bring vividly to our attention that we are constantly in danger of losing the power and life of faith despite our talking of faith and thus to perish eternally. Arouse us to offer ourselves wholly unto Thee, with body and soul, our thoughts, manners, words, and deeds, all our powers and talents, our time and all that is dear to us.

To this end hear our prayer and bless our present meeting for the sake of Thy love. Amen.

119. The Work of the Church Unhampered in Time of War.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank and praise Thee for graciously permitting us even during these times of unrest to assemble here in Thy sanctuary, to foster and enjoy brotherly fellowship, and in peace to build up ourselves on our most holy faith.

O let us vividly realize what great things Thou hast thereby done for us unworthy sinners.

Thereby Thou assurest us that Thou hast not forgotten us, that Thou earnestly seekest our salvation, that Thou rememberest us not in wrath, but in mercy.

Should we disregard this Thy gracious visitation, should we remain impenitent despite this Thine overwhelming goodness, what can we expect but that Thine everlasting wrath will come over us?

Grant us therefore not only time to repent, but repentance itself. Grant us not only days of grace, but grace itself. Show us not only Thy zeal to save us, but make us also eager to be saved.

Be gracious unto all of us who have either not yet become Thy children or have again fallen away and draw us unto Thyself. Strengthen the weak, enlighten the erring, and sustain the strong.

Be gracious unto our dear fatherland. Heal its breaches and bandage its wounds, restore unto it peace, make it willing to serve Thee, and make of it again a habitation of Thy goodness and faithfulness.

Hear us, dear heavenly Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy beloved Son. Amen.

120. Newness of Life.

Lord Jesus, he who in his heart believes in Thee is to confess Thee with his mouth; but he who does not believe in Thee must not claim to be Thine. Unto all hypocrites Thou sayest: "What hast Thou to do to declare My statutes or that Thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction and castest My words behind thee?" For that reason it is also Thy will that Thy believers refuse to acknowledge as brethren those who do not walk as becometh saints, but want to live after the lusts of their flesh.

Search us therefore and know our hearts; try us and know our thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in us and lead us in the way everlasting. Grant us grace humbly to realize where we have erred, sincerely to repent, to seek Thy grace, and to walk in newness of life.

Expose those among us who choose to continue in a life that profanes Thy holy name and fill us with hatred toward their sin and with courage and earnestness to separate ourselves from them lest we become partakers of their sins and their punishment.

Have mercy upon all of us, pour out Thy Holy Spirit upon us, and rescue whatever is not beyond rescue. Amen.

121. Caring for the Spiritual Welfare of Our Children.

Lord Jesus Christ, we have assembled here to discuss the spiritual welfare of our dear children, whom Thou hast purchased with Thy blood and blessed in Holy Baptism, whom Thou hast made Thine everlasting possession, and over whom Thou hast placed us as leaders and guardians, at whose hands Thou wilt therefore one day require them.

O pour into our hearts a full measure of Thy fervent and holy love to our children and at the same time fill us

with divine wisdom to lead our children in such a way as not to rob them of the grace with which they were endowed in Holy Baptism, that they may be preserved from the world and all wickedness and increase, not only in age, but also in grace and understanding, so that finally, when Thou hast called us out of this world, they may be Thy faithful witnesses in word and deed.

Great indeed are the perils to which our children are exposed in these last sad times, — unbelief, false doctrine, the vanity of this world, — which threaten to rob them of the salvation which Thou hast gained for them.

O keep us from becoming the cause of their ruin, either through misguidance or through a wicked example. Help us rather to resolve upon the most effective means of leading them to Thee, of keeping them with Thee, and of guarding them against being misled by the allurements and glamor of the world. Above all, however, grant us grace to be in earnest about being Thy disciples, to beware lest we halt between two opinions, seeking to serve Thee and the world at the same time, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling, and not to become a stumbling-block to our children, so that they will lose their faith, but to lead the way for them by a genuine faith and a good confession, by unfeigned love and true godliness.

Unto that end bless our present meeting for the sake of Thy blessed name. Amen.

122. Prizing Our Christian Youth as a Treasure.

O Lord, Thou hast entrusted to our beloved congregation a great treasure, a goodly number of young men and young women. Thou hast given them an immortal soul, which is to

inherit eternal life, and hast endowed them with talents both spiritual and physical.

It is Thy desire that we adequately value this treasure and for that reason instruct our youth in Thy saving Word as well as in all manner of knowledge that is profitable unto them for this life.

Their mind and heart is like unto a field in which only those good things will grow which have been sown and planted in it. Unless good seed is sown, the field of their mind and heart will run wild again and become a waste, producing only tares, thorns, and thistles.

Make us zealous therefore in caring for our youth and let Thy blessing rest upon everything we do in their behalf.

Grant that our present deliberations in their behalf may result in some worthy achievement. Hear us for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

123. Christian Family Life.

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," thus, O Lord God, our heavenly Father, spake Thy faithful servant Joshua in the presence of the assembled tribes of Israel. Not he alone, but his house, his wife, his children, his servants, should likewise serve Thee; Thy Word and Thy will he had made the rule in his house in order that his house might be Thy house and that all who went in and out might be Thy priests, engaged solely in Thy service.

Lord, Thine object in having the words of Joshua recorded in Thy holy Word was evidently this, that every father and every mother might say with Joshua: "I, too, and my house will serve the Lord."

But, alas! Lord, it is easy to repeat those words with our lips; to speak them truthfully, however, thereunto we need Thy Holy Spirit. We pray therefore Thee, help us that we

may serve Thee, not half-, but whole-heartedly, and that we may likewise lead and move our dear ones to serve Thee.

O Lord, we are well aware that Thy purpose in instituting family life was that we might lead one another unto Thee. We are well aware that a home in which Thou art not served presents an empty, sad, and gloomy spectacle, even though it be illuminated ever so brightly and be ornamented with glittering gold and costly furnishings; for such a home is filled with Thy wrath, and Thy curse rests upon it. However, a home whose residents serve Thee sparkles with light and loveliness, even though it be the humblest sod house; for in such a home Thy blessings are its storehouse of provisions, Thy grace its shield, and Thy heavenly peace its wall of defense.

O grant that in our homes father and mother, son and daughter, servant and maid, may exclaim with joy every morning: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord," until we shall finally inhabit the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, Thy mansion of bliss, where angels and men will join in serving Thee and "in the light of that blest place shall gaze upon Thee face to face." Amen.

124. Christian High School.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we have undertaken a task the aim of which is to serve our dear confirmed youth by imparting to them all manner of useful knowledge for this life and at the same time to keep them from the poison of the unbelieving world.

We are sure therefore that Thou art pleased with this our task, for Thou hast commanded us to lead Thy children, the work of Thy hands, unto Thee.

We pray Thee, help us that our undertaking may prosper. Prevent Satan, world, and flesh, the enemies of all that

is good, from hampering or ruining the glorious work which we have begun.

Grant us wisdom to pursue the proper course in every matter and steadfastness, patience, and zeal, that we may not grow weary in properly caring for our youth.

Give unto our instructors ability, faithfulness, and willingness to perform their difficult task as it should be done.

Give unto our pupils eagerness to learn and implant in their hearts the right fear of Thee; for that is the beginning of all wisdom.

Above all, grant blessing and success unto our planting and watering; for all depends on Thy blessing.

Grant us Thy grace also for our present deliberations for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

125. Young Men's Organization.

Lord Jesus, we have come before Thy presence in Thy sanctuary to enter into an agreement with these our beloved young men according to which we promise to give Thee our hearts and to be Thy possession in time and eternity.

However, in Thy Word Thou hast reminded us that the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. We indeed possess the strength and the inclination to forsake and forget Thee, but not the strength and the desire to remember Thee, to come unto Thee, and to become Thy disciples, witnesses, and followers. Besides, we are surrounded by an enticing and misleading world, which appeals to our eyes and hearts, and everywhere Satan, the wily tempter, spreads his nets and sets his traps to lead captive our souls.

Except Thou, therefore, our faithful Savior, have compassion on us and convert us by Thy all-powerful grace, we are hopelessly lost.

We pray Thee therefore, Lord Jesus, reject us not for being so unfaithful to Thee, but let the danger threatening us move Thee to extend unto us Thy rescuing hands of grace.

We are not aware of our true condition and of the things we lack; therefore let Thy Spirit open our eyes that we may realize it. We are blind to the dangers that beset us; reveal them unto us. That much is evident, we lack the proper zeal for the one thing needful; move us to be deeply concerned about it. We lack the proper horror for sin; fill us with such horror. Our hearts cling to the world and its vain pleasures, possessions, and glories; cut us loose from them. There is little or no desire in our hearts for Thee, for Thy grace, for Thy spiritual, heavenly, and eternal treasures, and for blessed fellowship with Thee; O draw our hearts unto Thee. Our soul is fickle, our faith wavers to and fro, our love chooses this one moment and the next moment something else; show us that no one can serve two masters, that we must either be Thine altogether or remain separated from Thee forever.

O Lord Jesus, who not only peerest into the recesses of our hearts, but canst also change them, have compassion on us and bestow upon us in this evening hour the riches of Thy grace. Pour out upon us Thy Spirit, the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, of grace and prayer, of power and strength, of sanctification and the fear of God, and make us all willing and fervent and cheerful to vow loyalty unto Thee unto death. Help us then also really to remain faithful unto Thee until finally we can say on our death-bed: "I have fought a good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

Hear us, Lord Jesus, yea, hear us, for the sake of that love with which Thou hast loved us from eternity. Amen and Amen.

126. Spiritual Heritage Passed on to Posterity.

Lord God, heavenly Father, Thou hast done great things for us. Not only hast Thou permitted us to come to a lively knowledge of Thy saving truth; Thou hast also led us out of a land of coercion and oppression into a land of liberty, where, unhampered by government officials, we may live according to Thy Word and as a congregation serve Thee and proclaim Thy name publicly. For this Thy goodness we give Thee thanks and will praise Thee in all eternity.

But Thy great favor at the same time brings with it a great obligation.

We are not to be content to keep what we have, but to make provisions that the heritage entrusted to us be passed on to our children and children's children and that we may prove a blessing unto all with whom we come into contact.

Grant that we may never weary of this task, but unceasingly consider what we should do that Thy name may be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done.

Keep us from imitating those who have become sluggish and cold in Thy service, but grant that we may imitate those who as holy priests have served Thee day and night and consecrated themselves with all their thoughts, words, and deeds.

Grant that the godlessness of these latter times may not blunt our spiritual senses, but awaken us to greater Christian zeal, so that we, like Lot in Sodom, may walk righteously in this world as becometh saints.

Let not the fact that Thou hast favored us above thousands of others lull us into security. Help us rather to realize that, since Thou hast given much unto us, Thou wilt also require much of us, and since Thou hast committed much unto us, Thou wilt ask the more of us.

Alas! the poor, blind world zealously serves the flesh and

spares no efforts to satisfy its mad hunger for gold, honor, and pleasure. Kindle within us an even greater zeal to gain better, that is, eternal, treasures.

Life, alas, is so short! Grant us grace therefore to leave behind us a memorial of our faith and our love; and may our memory be blessed long after we have been laid to rest in our graves! Hear us for the sake of Thy beloved Son. Amen.

127. Calling a Teacher.

Lord Jesus, by Thy holy Word Thou hast again warned us against despising any one of these little ones; for their angels do always behold the face of Thy Father in heaven.

We pray Thee, help us to realize vividly the immense treasure we possess in our dear children. Help us to remember that they, too, are loved by Thee, that they have been redeemed by Thy blood, washed from their sins in Holy Baptism, and made into temples of Thy Holy Spirit, into children of God and heirs of everlasting life. Let us not forget that some day Thou wilt require them at our hands as Thy possession, entrusted to us only temporarily. Accordingly put us on our guard lest we offend them. Let us leave no stone unturned to keep them safe from the evil Foe and the world, to lead them to Thee, and to keep them with Thee, so that some day we may say to Thee: Here are they whom Thou hast given us; we have lost none of them.

O Lord, fill us especially in this evening hour with such holy thoughts since we have come to deliberate upon the choice of a shepherd for these lambs. Help us to find that man whom Thou hast chosen for them and grant that he may gladly accept our call and with Thy help and blessings feed the flock of our little ones.

Lord, hear us for the sake of Thy love for children. Amen.

128. Christian Bringing Up of Children.

Lord God, heavenly Father, by Thy holy apostle Thou sayest to us in Thy precious Word: "Ye fathers, bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Thou dost not command us to love our children, for such love Thou hast Thyself planted into our hearts, nor has our sinfulness been able to erase such love out of our hearts.

But Thou knowest how blind our natural love is; again and again, when we aim to make our children content and happy, we in reality plunge them into misfortune and ruin. For that reason Thou chargest us: "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." For such nurture and admonition is the only means by which our dear children, whom Thou hast adopted as Thine own in Holy Baptism, will remain with Thee and finally become strong to resist successfully all the enticements of their flesh, the world, and the evil Foe, until they will finally obtain the crown which Thou hast reserved for them.

Grant us therefore wisdom from above, a holy zeal, and that faithfulness and steadfastness which will never become weary or sluggish, without which we can never successfully be Thine instruments in the bringing up of our dear children. Keep us on our guard lest we choose as models those people of this world who care nothing for Thee; instead, let Thy precious Word be our guiding star also in this matter.

Guide us also in our present deliberations and let our meeting prove an everlasting blessing to ourselves and to our children.

O God, Love Eternal, Thou true Father of all that are called children in heaven and on earth, hear us for the sake of Thy dear Child Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

129. Children a Precious Trust.

Lord Jesus, the most precious treasure which Thou hast entrusted unto us are our dear children.

Thou hast given unto them an immortal soul, which has been purchased with Thy blood and made Thy possession, and in Holy Baptism Thou hast made them temples of Thy Holy Spirit. Thou chargest us: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God."

Grant us grace to appreciate the invaluable worth of a child's soul, to realize the danger of an inexperienced child's being misled and our own great responsibility. Let us do nothing that would harm our children in body or soul and omit nothing that might bring them to Thee and keep them with Thee.

O Lord Jesus, Thou everlasting Friend of sinners and of the children, give unto us all the same mind to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in Thy stead to be their teachers, their leaders, their guardians, their providers in body and soul, so that some day we may say to Thee: "Here they are, Lord, the children whom Thou hast given us; we have lost none of them." Let us enter into Thy joy, O Lord. ^{we will do according to thy promise for thy love} Amen.

130. Developing Our Children's Talents.

Lord God, heavenly Father, Thou hast given unto us dear children, whom Thou hast given an immortal, dearly redeemed soul, whom Thou hast furthermore blessed with various fine talents to be used in this life as well as in the next.

What a precious trust Thou hast given us in our dear children! What holy concern and solicitude for them should therefore fill our hearts, making us willing not only to lead

them to Thee, their God, but also to develop in them the talents which Thou hast entrusted to them!

For that reason Thou hast blessed us so abundantly with earthly goods and given us men who are capable and ready to instruct our children in all manner of useful arts and knowledge.

Help us to redeem this time of Thy gracious visitation. Give us hearts aflame with love, so that we shall cheerfully perform the duties we have as parents, and give us wisdom to perform them in such a way as to magnify Thy glorious name and to insure the temporal and eternal welfare of our children and the salvation of our brethren and fellow-redeemed.

To that end bless also our present deliberations for the sake of Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

131. Children Are Precious Jewels.

Lord God, heavenly Father, in addition to the uncounted bodily and spiritual gifts and benefits which daily flow from Thy bountiful goodness, Thou hast given us also our dear children, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone.

O what precious possessions are our children, more precious than heaven and earth! For heaven and earth will pass away, but our children with their immortal souls will together with us abide with Thee forever. How our miserable life is enriched especially by our children! What agony of heart and what bitter tears result when Thou takest one of our children from us! It is then that we realize that our children are far more precious than gold and silver, than house and home.

Therefore we thank Thee to-day — and we shall do so forever — for this precious gift and join in the prayer that Thou wouldst be gracious unto our dear children. Supply their wants for time and for eternity; preserve them from

every evil of body and soul; give unto them Thy Holy Spirit; preserve them from sin and unbelief; let them not be misled into error, but keep them in Thy truth and grace to the end.

But, O Lord God, we tremble when we recall that Thou hast placed us over our children as Thy representatives to lead and guide them on earth and that Thou wilt some day say unto us: "Where are the children whom I have given you? Have any of them been lost?" For again and again we have been guilty of neglecting them, due either to a lack of love or to misguided love, to a lack of earnestness or to sinful zeal, to a lack of wisdom or to the deceptive wisdom of this world.

O Lord, if only because of our children Thou shouldst enter into judgment with us, we should already on this account be doomed to eternal damnation.

We pray Thee therefore, grant us grace to behold our sins and shortcomings in the mirror of Thy holy Law in order that we may crave Thy gracious pardon and then make us willing to perform the duties we have as parents, which Thou hast shown us in Thy Word. Bless also our joint deliberations to the end that we may be faithful parents here and together with our children inherit eternal life; through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, our Savior. Amen.

132. Making Use of God's Grace.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast led us into a Church in which Thy holy Gospel is confessed and preached in truth and purity and Thy holy Sacraments are administered as instituted by Thee. These means of grace offer abundant pasture unto our soul. The direct way, not a roundabout way, to Thee and Thy grace is presented unto us. Nothing hinders us from being certain of Thy grace and our final salvation, if we but lay hold on Thee by faith in the promises of Thy Word and the holy

Sacraments. Sweet comfort in every need and temptation fills our soul, and we are sure of this comfort even in the hour of death.

Help us, we beseech Thee, to make faithful use of Thy grace, to rejoice over it, and through it to find, and to be kept in, the true way to eternal life, until finally we shall join the innumerable company of angels and the spirits made perfect and give eternal thanks and praise unto Thee, the Lamb that was slain for us. Amen.

133. A Christian High School.

Gracious God and Father, Thou hast enabled us to found and maintain unto this day an institution of learning in which our youth, after leaving the parochial school, may receive additional instruction in various branches of knowledge that are useful for this life and become skilled in all manner of useful occupations and where, above all, they will be preserved from the poison of unbelief and error, from the spirit and the vanity of the world, and at the same time be trained in Thy fear, which is the beginning of all wisdom.

Many obstacles have from time to time confronted us, but with Thy help they have been overcome; many a gift of love has been needed, but through Thy grace they have been cheerfully offered; again and again we despaired of success, but, lo! as a fruitful tree in Thy garden our beloved school now greets our eye; it has been crowned with Thy blessings.

Thanks be unto Thee, O Lord, for Thy powerful help, for that grace of Thine which turneth the hearts of men, for Thy gracious blessing.

Also in the future, we beseech Thee, do not withdraw Thy hand from this work of our hands, but continue to give Thy increase unto our planting and watering.

Fill us with zeal also to-day cheerfully to continue our work, until finally Thou wilt call us from our labors and take us home unto Thyself, where we shall rest from all our labors; through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

[Emperor Julian forbade the Christians to maintain elementary and high schools, the latter for the purpose of reading the classics —. Luther, on the contrary —.

It is very foolish to try to acquire riches in order to bequeath them to one's children. Better by far to procure a capital for them that cannot be squandered — a good education. He who lacks educational training finds that he will always be at a disadvantage.]

Prayers at Meetings of the Board of Elders.

1. Divine Counsel and Guidance.

Lord Jesus, we have gathered here to deliberate upon the affairs of our dear congregation. Even in our private affairs we are often at a loss how to proceed; much less are we capable of advising an entire congregation.

Therefore we turn to Thee, whose name is Counselor, who art great in counsel and mighty in work, and pray Thee: Be our Counselor at this time. Pour out upon us a full measure of Thy Holy Spirit that He may enlighten us by means of Thy Word and help us to recognize both our ailment and the effective remedy. Grant also that our congregation may faithfully apply that remedy and recover from its ailment.

Finally we join Thy whole Christian Church on earth in the prayer: Hasten Thy return and make an end of all the sorrows and perils of Thine elect by taking them unto Thyself. Hear us, Lord Jesus, for the sake of Thy precious promises. Amen.

2. Death of a Faithful Member.

Lord, with sorrowful and heavy hearts we have met here to-day. An honored member of our board, who for over three decades served our dear congregation, a father in Christ, is no longer with us. Thou hast — we doubt not — taken him home, hast summoned him from labor to eternal rest, from the battle-field to eternal triumph.

Humbly we bow before Thine unsearchable wisdom according to which Thou hast seen fit to take from us a model for Thy believers such as he was, so talented, faithful, and zealous a laborer in Thy Church, thus making our poor congregation still poorer. We pray Thee, cheer the sorrowing survivors with Thy heavenly comfort and let his death arouse us

to labor with ever greater faithfulness while it is day; for the night cometh when no man can work.

Hear us for the sake of Jesus, Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

3. Concern for the Wayward.

Lord Jesus, from day to day it is becoming more and more evident that in our midst there are souls that have a name that they live, but in reality are dead; they hear Thy Word along with the rest of us, but it does not sink into their souls; they wish to be known as Thine, but refuse to separate themselves completely from the world; with the rest of us they say "Lord, Lord!" but fail to do Thy Father's will.

Grant that we, whom Thou hast appointed as watchmen, may not be asleep at our post of duty, but watch and raise our voice that it may sound forth like the blast of a trumpet. Give us such love as will never despair of rescuing any one, however hopeless his case may appear to be; a love that will never grow weary of instructing, admonishing, correcting, and pleading.

Above all, bless Thy Word, so that no one among us may harden his heart through sin, but that all will permit Thee to open the door of their heart in order that Thou mayest dwell in them and sup with them and they with Thee at the banquet of Thy grace. Hear us for the sake of Thy grace and truth. Amen.

4. Pardon and Faithfulness.

O Lord, Thou hast graciously appointed us to the leadership of a circle of congregations. Our office is a very important and responsible one; and yet, how incapable by nature we are properly to perform the duties of our office! We have need therefore of earnestly and fervently beseeching Thee to make us able and faithful.

But we must ruefully confess that, if Thou shouldst enter into judgment with us alone because of the administration of this our office, we could not answer Thee one of a thousand.

We pray Thee therefore to forgive also our sins of office, make good that which we have neglected, and fill us with a new and an ever greater zeal to serve Thee in Thy congregation, which Thou hast purchased with a price.

Let this be a blessing unto us, that we are not standing alone, but that we can lend one another a helping hand, arouse and inspire one another, and use each talent which Thou hast entrusted to us for the benefit of every soul in our congregation.

Above all, bless our dear congregation and henceforth let it exert a blessed influence in this great city; for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom Thou desirest all nations on earth to be blessed. Amen.

5. Humility.

Lord God, heavenly Father, in these last sad times, in which many false prophets have gone out into the world, it has pleased Thee to favor our congregation by giving unto it Thy pure Word. In the days just passed Thou hast again poured streams of love down upon us. Grant that as a result it may grow and blossom and bring forth fruits of faith in great abundance.

Let our congregation exert a wholesome influence upon the world in these latter days. Preserve it from giving offense. Let it not speak with Laodicea: "I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing," but grant that, the more its members hear of Thy Word, the greater be their desire to hear still more.

Endow us, their elders, with the gifts of Thy Spirit, so that in all things we may be examples unto them.

Hear us for Thy name's sake. Amen.

6. End of Year.

Lord Jesus, for the last time this year we have gathered here in Thy name to deliberate upon the weal and woe of our dear congregation.

As we look back, we are filled with thankfulness toward Thee for taking our dear congregation into Thy loving care during the past year. Who knows what wicked designs Satan had in mind? But Thou didst prove that Thou art more powerful in us than he that is in the world. Thou hast preserved unto us Thy pure Word and unadulterated Sacraments. Thou hast graciously kept us from being torn asunder by false teachers, by men of a haughty, contentious, and malicious mind; on the contrary, by Thy grace we could build ourselves up on our most holy faith and thus enjoy many spiritual blessings.

But if we look back upon what we have done, we must confess, and we do so with sorrowful hearts, that we could not answer Thee one of a thousand if Thou shouldst enter into judgment with us.

Therefore we pray Thee, forgive us wherever we have erred, and as this year is drawing to a close, let us end it seeking and receiving Thy forgiveness and begin the new year as Thy true children.

Grant unto us also in this hour a blessing from the fulness of Thy grace for the sake of Thy salutary birth. Amen.

7. Guidance and Blessing.

Lord Jesus, Thou alone hast founded Thy Church; Thou alone dost preserve and govern it. But according to Thy fathomless wisdom and goodness Thou art pleased to care for, and direct, Thy Church through sinful men, and Thou hast chosen also us as Thine instruments.

Grant us therefore, we beseech Thee, wisdom and understanding, love and patience, sincerity and zeal for the faithful performance of our duties.

Without Thy grace we could not further Thy work, but would only hamper it and ruin everything.

What, however, by Thy grace we have come to recognize as beneficial for our congregation and therefore resolve to carry out, that we humbly ask Thee to bless that it may redound to the weal of our congregation and every individual member of it, to the spreading of Thy kingdom in this city, and to the glory of Thy name.

Let us in this hour experience Thy gracious presence because of Thy promise. Amen.

8. Pardon and Power.

Lord Jesus, Thou alone hast founded Thy Church on earth and our own congregation, Thou alone dost rule, defend, and preserve it. But Thou wouldst have us ask Thee to bestow these blessings.

We therefore pray Thee, graciously let our congregation experience Thy loving care. Preserve it in the true knowledge of the saving truth, yea, let it grow therein, and do not permit it to be misled into soul-destroying error. Keep it also in the way of Thy commandments, grant it strength to walk this way at all times, and let it not imitate the ways of the godless world.

Do not regard our unworthiness and unfaithfulness; for if Thou, O Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, who will stand? In Thy sight shall no man living be justified. Look rather upon our frame and remember that we are dust. Consider how frail we are and to what grievous assaults of flesh, world, and devil we are subjected.

Thou hast called us into Thy Kingdom of Grace. O per-

form in us the good work which Thou hast begun until Thou hast completed it and we shall be with Thee in Thy Kingdom of Glory.

Grant this for the sake of Thy gracious promises, given unto us already at our baptism, and for the sake of Thine atoning blood, shed for all the members of our congregation. Unto Thee be honor, praise, and glory in time and in eternity! Amen.

9. Christmas Season.

Lord Jesus, in the past days we have been refreshed and strengthened by Thy faithful saying, worthy of all acceptance, that Thou didst come into the world to save sinners. Now we have assembled to deliberate upon the needs of our congregation. However, with our own reason and strength we cannot hope to be successful in our task. Therefore we pray Thee, enlighten us by Thy Holy Spirit to recognize the wants, the weaknesses, and the perils of our congregation and to know how to proceed that it may grow in all things. Show us what to do and help us to do it and add Thy blessings and success to our efforts.

Hear us, Lord Jesus, for the sake of Thy saving birth. Amen.

10. Zeal and Faithfulness.

Lord Jesus, through Thy marvelous guidance we have been made teachers, elders, and leaders in Thy dear church.

What a high and holy calling! What models we should therefore be in everything!

But in shame we must acknowledge to Thee that we are often weak and unfaithful and slothful in the performance of our duties.

We therefore pray Thee, forgive our shortcomings and

enable us truthfully to say with Thy holy apostle: "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ." Deliver us from every sin that doth beset us and make us zealous in our Christian calling as well as in our official duties. Grant that we may not be hampered in the faithful performance of our duties, neither by slothfulness nor by the desire to be men-pleasers nor by fear of men. Let us ever bear in mind that we must some day give account to Thee of how we performed the duties of our office. Finally bless whatever we do in obedience to Thy Word that Thou mayest be honored and our souls may be saved eternally. Amen.

11. Appreciating and Supporting Our Church.

Lord Jesus, it is Thy will that Thy followers should not pursue their pilgrimage heavenward alone, but associate with one another and found congregations, establish in their midst the office which proclaims the message of reconciliation and administers the holy Sacraments, gather at Thy house to hear Thy Word, make use of Thy Sacraments, unite in prayer and song, and as spiritual priests edify, teach, admonish, warn, rebuke, and comfort one another.

We pray Thee, let this congregation, yea, every member of it, realize what benefits we enjoy in that we are permitted to manage the affairs of a Christian congregation undisturbed.

Create within every one of us a mind and a willingness cheerfully to bring our offerings for the maintenance and extension of this congregation.

Above all, bless our congregation for the good of our souls and the souls of our children and let it be an influence for good in this entire city; yea, make of our congregation itself a city set on a high hill, which will send its beams of light into

the surrounding country by its testimony to the truth, its deeds of love toward all, and especially toward those who are of the household of faith.

Hear us for Thine own sake. Amen.

12. Enlightenment and Obedience.

O Lord, great in number are the enemies seeking to harm our soul; great therefore is the danger that we might perish. Not only do Satan and the world, by means of enticements and threats, seek to plunge us into error and sin; even our own flesh is our enemy.

We should have to despair if Thou wert not a gracious God, ready and able to help, urging us confidently to appear before Thee and to ask of Thee whatever we need.

Upon Thy command and promise we come before Thee and pray Thee above all: Forgive us all our sins which we have committed in thoughts, words, and deeds. Forgive also those sins which are unknown to us, bury them in the depth of the sea, and remember them no more. Let us be and remain Thy children by grace in time and in eternity.

Grant unto us Thy Holy Spirit that we may henceforth not only walk firmly with hearts trusting in Thy grace, but also be on our guard against sinning knowingly and lead a holy and truly Christian life, so that we may please Thee and adorn the doctrine which we confess with our mouths.

Enlighten us with the light of Thy Holy Spirit also in this hour in which we intend in Thy fear to deliberate upon the subject of proper Christian conduct and make us willing to submit ourselves in all matters to Thy Word.

Yea, stretch out Thy gracious hands over us, over our brethren, over this city, and over our entire country and help us in every need. Amen and Amen.

13. The Savior's Presence.

Lord Jesus, when Thou didst leave this world to ascend into heaven, Thou didst promise Thy Church: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." We are certain therefore that even to-day Thou art with us and that Thou wilt ever be with us. Alas! to be robbed of that certainty would leave us in despair. For Thou hast called us as leaders of Thy Church. Where would we find the required wisdom and knowledge, holiness and righteousness, love and zeal, humility and patience, courage and steadfastness, if Thou didst not produce all this within us? In childlike confidence we therefore beseech Thee: Do not fail us nor forsake us, but make of us useful and faithful instruments of Thy grace; do Thou alone rule through us. Keep us from becoming responsible for the neglect or loss of one soul. Bless our humble efforts for the benefit of Thy congregation in order that in our midst the dead may be raised, sinners converted, the fallen restored, the weak strengthened, and all Thine own be preserved unto eternal life. Amen.

14. Faithfulness.

Lord Jesus, Thou hast entrusted to our care a large number of immortal souls redeemed by Thy blood that we should feed them with the Bread of Life and under Thy kingly sway rule them as a congregation of the living God. We realize full well and acknowledge it in deepest humility that by nature and by our own power and strength we are totally unfit for so great a task. We therefore pray Thee to grant us Thy Holy Spirit, wisdom from above, divine watchfulness, genuine earnestness and zeal, true gentleness, humility, patience, and a faithfulness that knows neither fear nor favor. Enlighten, arouse, and direct the hearts of those over whom we have been

placed that they may give heed to Thy voice when sounded forth by us, obey Thy holy Word in all matters, and endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Grant this, O Lord, for the good of all of us, for the praise and honor of Thy name, and for the sake of Thy Shepherd's faithfulness. Amen.

15. Humility and Guidance.

Lord Jesus, Thy kingdom is not of this world. It is not a physical, earthly, temporal kingdom, but a spiritual, heavenly, eternal kingdom, a kingdom of grace and truth unto salvation. The affairs of Thy kingdom are therefore not to be conducted according to the dictates of reason and nature nor according to human counsel, desires, and wisdom, but only according to Thy Word and the Spirit of Thy grace.

Help us, whom Thou hast called to be leaders in Thy Church, to despair of our own wisdom and grant us grace to be guided solely by the light of Thy Word and to be moved and directed alone by Thy Holy Spirit.

Look not upon our unworthiness nor upon the many shortcomings of our beloved congregation; but graciously consider the fact that Thou hast purchased us with Thy precious blood, atoned for our sins, and reconciled us unto Thy Father.

Be with us in the future as Thou hast been with us in the past that our undertakings may redound to Thy glory. Amen.

16. Workers Together with God.

Lord God, heavenly Father, marvelous is Thy counsel and great Thy love and kindness! Thou alone art the Source of all wisdom and power; without Thee we can do nothing. Nevertheless it has pleased Thee to employ men as Thine associates and assistants in the upbuilding of Thy kingdom on

earth, in the work of saving those whom Thou hast redeemed. With David we exclaim: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him and the son of man that Thou visitest him?"

And — O fathomless grace! — Thou hast called even us to be Thine associates and assistants. Help us to realize the greatness of Thy grace and honor and faithfully to perform that unto which Thou hast called us. Give us a willing mind to serve Thy kingdom with all we are and possess, and guide us in such a way that we may serve successfully as tools in Thy hand; that many souls that are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death may be brought to light; that many who are still under Thy wrath may be made partakers of Thy grace; that many who still walk in the way of sin may be brought to the way of righteousness; that many who are still lost may be saved. Thus be merciful unto us sinners, who are but dust in Thy sight; for the sake of Thy dear Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, unto the eternal glory of Thy great name. Amen.

17. Conscientious Service.

Lord Jesus, gracious and joyous indeed is the message which was proclaimed to us so abundantly during the past weeks and by means of which Thou didst refresh and delight our hearts.

It is Thy will that after such gracious watering we should now bring forth fruit in abundance.

But, alas! even the thought of it causes us to tremble. For we know only too well how blind, dead, obstinate, ungrateful, fickle, and perverse our heart is by nature.

We therefore call upon Thee for help and beseech Thee: Help us to be in earnest about serving Thee by ministering to Thy congregation, to be faithful and conscientious in every

duty imposed upon us by our office, to be guided in everything not by our sinful flesh and blood, but solely by Thy Word and Thy Holy Spirit; and thus help us to be a blessing unto many.

Bless also our deliberations at this time for the sake of Thy truth and grace. Amen.

18. Faithful Watchmen.

Lord Jesus, in these latter days Thou hast built up our dear congregation "as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers," and hast appointed us to watch over it. Help us now to perform the duties of our high calling faithfully, to watch conscientiously, that the enemy make inroads neither upon pure doctrine nor upon godly life, but that all members may be kept safe from every peril and harm that may threaten their soul, that sinners be brought to repentance, the weak strengthened, the erring brought back, the ailing made whole, the distressed comforted, those in danger warned, the strong made still stronger, until we shall all enter Thine everlasting habitations and be saved through Thy merits. Amen.

